



The New Faces Of Maturin by Kapra90

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Summary: In the Big Apple, the decades old horror of a small town like Derry is all but unknown to the cityfolk. However, when the eldest brother of a familiar turtle quad senses something greater than any enemy they have faced is plaguing the city with fear and death, he realizes the time to act is now. Neither he, nor his brothers and their friends, have any idea what they're up against.

1. It Begins

Good afternoon, readers! I am back with my partner in crime, Dixie Darlin, for a new story that I hope you will all love! In the spirit of the upcoming Halloween season and the release of IT; the movie, we would like to present this "out of the box" crossover that I hope leaves you on the edge of your seats. This will feature a (hopefully) nice mix of the adventurous thrill that the TMNTs always provide, but also couple this with the feeling of impending doom and suspense IT evokes in its victims and viewers alike. Elements of a "growing up" sort of path for the turtles will most likely be seen throughout, a point which I think King's story and the story of the turtles will harmonize. Well, I've rambled enough, so without further ado, please read and enjoy!

'Good morning New York; today is June 19th, 2011, and we start off today's news reel with the search for Amelia Smith. Six year old Amelia was reported missing three days ago when-'

"Hey, Earth to Leo!" Mikey exclaimed as he hopped over the couch to sit beside his brother. "Man, the news is so boring."

"Quiet, Mikey." Leo sighed. "Look at this. Another kid in our area went missing three days ago. What are WE missing? Look, this is just three blocks away."

"I know what'll cheer you up! You can play some video games with us. You're pretty good at Super Smash Brawl."

"This isn't a game, Mikey. We really need to focus more on actually protecting others. People are getting hurt out there, and here we are, sitting in the sewer." Leo replied.

"Come on, come on, come on!" Raphael exclaimed as he and Donnie played against each other.

"And, boom. I win again, Raph." Donatello smirked.

"What the hell?! You had 98% damage!" Raphael shouted.

"All worth it while I waited for the super charge up. You didn't stand a chance." Donnie said.

"Okay, okay look at this. Look at my stats! They're all stronger than you, this is the best fighting character in this game!"

"Being the best fighter doesn't give you an automatic win, Raph. It's all about tactic, it's about taking any and all skills into account."

"Oh, whatever... it's a stupid game anyway." Raphael tossed the controller aside, heading out of the room.

"Leo, um... hate to say this to you, but... Donnie's kind of better than all of us, so your chances of winning are pretty slim." Mikey whispered.

"Mikey, for the last time, I'm trying to focus here!" Leo exclaimed, sighing when Mikey frowned. "Look, I'm sorry. It's just... we have a job to do, and I need to know what's going on out there, who needs our help."

"Yeah... but we still have to have fun sometimes, right?" Mikey asked. "I mean, we still need time for pizza, for games, movies, music-"

"Hey, guys!" A chipper voice spoke as they entered the lounge.

"-... and for girls." Mikey smirked, Leo rolling his eyes as he nudged him aside.

"Hey, April." Leo gave her a nod.

"H- Hi April, um..." Donnie cleared his throat, switching the other television to a NASA channel. "I was just um... studying how the circumference fluctuations of the sun affect the-"

"Sounds neat, Donnie, um... I just finished up a news report in the area so I wanted to just say hi. There's a conference I have to get to in an hour, though, so I don't have a lot of time to hang around." April responded. "Do you mind if I freshen up a bit while I'm here? There's no way I'd have time to get back to my apartment and get to the

conference in time."

"Sure, of course. Help yourself." Leo said. "Though, kind of an oxymoron though, isn't it? Freshening up in a sewer?" Leo chuckled.

"Leo!" Mikey exclaimed. "April, I am so sorry- Leo, how could you call her a moron? You apologize right now!"

Leo looked at his brother flatly. "Mikey, an oxymoron is-"

"What they mean to say- or rather, what I mean to say, April, is that you always look beautiful." He tensed up then. "I- I mean, no, I didn't mean that... well, I did, but I-"

"Look, I really need to get ready... I'll be a few minutes, okay?" April chuckled before taking her purse and a few bags, heading into the lavatory. Donnie groaned, facepalming himself.

"Stupid, stupid, stupid..."

"Hey, ladies." The three turtles turned at the sound of Raphael's voice as he strode in. "Sensei wants to speak with us. He said it's important." He announced before heading back out of the room.

"Uh... did one of us forget to sharpen the blades again?" Mikey scratched his head.

"I guess we'll find out. Come on, you guys." Leo said, the three following Raphael.

Soon, all four were seated in the training room, their posture upright as they waited quietly. They all glanced up when footsteps approached, Splinter raising a hairy brow as he looked upon his sons.

"I have not called you here for a lesson today. This week, you are all celebrating another birthday. Each year, like a tree, I return to look upon your growth. One does not just grow physically. They also grow in knowledge, in wisdom." He stopped his pacing to look upon them. "You are not little boys anymore." He motioned for them to rise, the four doing so. "You are all expected to go forward this year with a sense of responsibility, of honor. Not just as ninjas... but as the men you will soon become." Splinter shut his eyes for a moment as Mikey

slowly raised his hand. "Yes, Michelangelo?"

"You're not expecting us to eat vegetables from now on, are you?" He asked sheepishly, the other three turtles giving him a look or shaking his head.

"Mikey, aren't you listening to a word our father is telling us?" Leo asked. "If you would stop acting like a child for two seconds, you would see."

"Leonardo." Splinter held up a hand, Leo instantly silencing. "Michelangelo. One of the critical aspects of growing up is finding a sense of priority. For many years, your world has been small, obscure from the larger world which exists and all the dangers within it, whether you acknowledge it or not. Growing up does not mean giving up the things you love, but rather, seeing the truth, and knowing what is most important. As you have learned the art of being a ninja, learning your enemies and how to defeat them for the greater good, your world has expanded. But there is even more beyond that, my sons. Even I do not know all the world. Even I still find myself growing more in mind and spirit each year, learning and becoming wiser. You must do the same."

"O- Okay." Mikey said, Donnie rolling his eyes as he sighed.

"Leonardo." Splinter said, getting his attention. "You seem unfocused."

"No, I... I understand what you're saying, Sensei. I do know what is important. That's why I need to be out there. We need to be out there. I know you fear our risk of exposure, and we learned first hand the reason why. But how are we supposed to help anyone if we're always in here?"

"Again, my son, you must learn priority. If we could save every life, that would be the best outcome. But it is also not realistic. Overexerting ourselves will lead to failure just as the opposite would. We must find a balance, my son. Priority will help guide you to the right answer. Remember, as a leader, you are also responsible for the safety of yourself and your brothers." Leo gave him a nod, returning to his thoughts. "Now then. With that said, I believe someone has a surprise in store for you." Splinter's eyes squinted a bit as he smiled.

The turtles turned around, smiling as April stood behind them with a birthday cake, the frosting making it look like a pizza pie. "Happy birthday, you guys!"

"Oh man, this is awesome!" Mikey exclaimed.

"Did you make this yourself?" Donnie asked.

"Yeah... I'm not the best cook, but I managed alright, I think." April admitted.

"I'm sure it'll be delicious." Donnie said as he scratched the back of his neck.

Leo watched as his family and April ate their respective slices of cake. His own piece sat untouched, Leo shifting his gaze to look at it blankly. His mind repeated the words that the news reporter had spoken... Amelia Smith would never have another birthday.

He found himself standing, excusing himself quietly, before leaving the room. Everyone stared at him as he left, silence filling the room. Mikey looked around, grinning uncertainly. "Can I have his cake if he doesn't want it?" The others only stared at him flatly in response.

Up above them, Leo was outside, coated by the darkness as he perched himself on a rooftop. He sighed, closing his eyes in thought. There was something going on in this city; somehow, it seemed different than usual. It hung in the air like static, filling every molecule of the space. Why couldn't anyone else sense it?

Back in the sewer, April gathered her things. "So, the conference wasn't a complete lie... I need to be there soon. I'll see you guys around, okay?"

"Thanks again for the cake, April." Donnie replied.

"Yes, April, this was very thoughtful." Splinter nodded lightly.

"Maybe there will be a crumb left the next time you swing by." Raph chuckled, Donnie rolling his eyes as Mikey snickered.

"Don't worry about it. You should worry more about Leo... what's up

with him lately? He seems so... withdrawn." April commented.

"Leonardo is learning the hard lessons of what it means to be an adult. Give him some time to reflect, he will make sense of everything in due time." Splinter said. "When he is ready to open up to myself and his brothers, he will do so. It is his obligation as a leader."

As Raph scoffed, April nodded. "Well, just don't let him wander off. Who knows who could be out there." She said before taking her leave, waving to the remaining turtles.

"Pfft, yeah, like anything is tougher than us!" Mikey exclaimed.

April shook her head as she giggled to herself, heading back up to the surface. She glanced at her watch, nodding to herself as she determined she was making excellent time. As she turned the corner, she did not notice something lurking in the shadows, quietly and carefully stalking her. Something red was barely seen, the sheen of the plastic, rubbery material giving it an unnatural glow in the low light. As April continued to go about her way, the red object slowly floated into the air, stopping for a few silent moments. Suddenly, the balloon was hurled, just barely missing April as she nearly jumped out of her skin. Water splattered just by her feet, and the young woman whirled around as laughter was heard.

"What the- are you serious right now?!" She exclaimed, the caster of the water balloon emerging from the shadows. "Casey, I swear, if you would have hit me with that, you would have been dead!"

"Hey, come on, April, it's summer! And what's a good summer without a water balloon fight?" The young man replied, lifting up his hockey mask to reveal a playful grin.

"There is a time and a place for everything, and right now, it's time for me to go to a very important conference that may, I don't know, really help my career. Just because you want to spend the rest of your life delivering pizzas does not mean that-"

"Woah, woah, woah! Do not insult the art of pizza delivering. That takes special skill to navigate through these streets."

"Okay, I need to go. Goodnight, Casey." April said with annoyance, shaking her head as she headed off.

"So, another day, then?" Casey shouted after her, snickering as he hoisted a backpack on his shoulder.

April huffed once she was alone once again, her brows furrowed in annoyance. Up ahead, she blinked when she saw another red balloon, becoming more irritated. "Real funny, Casey." She grumbled as she slapped the floating object away from her. She turned a corner, stopping when she saw yet another one. "This is the worst prank you've come up with." She said, bopping the balloon out of the way. She went on a bit further, stopping when she thought she heard something. "Hello?" She called as she turned around, gasping a bit when the same balloon was hovering behind her. "What the... seriously?" She groaned, though deep down, she was starting to feel uneasy. This was getting a little weird, not that she would admit it out loud. She'd never live it down if Casey or any of the turtles found out she became unsettled by a balloon of all things. She turned back around, but stopped short upon doing so. She gasped, finding that her way was blocked completely by dozens of red balloons that had definitely not been there a few seconds ago.

As suddenly as they appeared, they all popped simultaneously, the noise deafening. April's hair went on end, busting her tail to run to the nearest bus stop.

Meanwhile, Leo glanced over as he was joined by his brother, Donnie sitting beside him as he adjusted his headset. "Hey... you know, this isn't going to last long with Raph and Mikey around." He said, handing Leo his slice of cake and a fork. "It's your birthday, too."

Leo couldn't help but smile a bit. Donnie was always the most level-headed beside himself. "Thanks." He said, deciding to take a bite.

"It's a quiet night." Donnie said. "Leo... you shouldn't be so hard on yourself."

"I just want to be able to make more of a difference." Leo got up then, pacing around on the rooftop. "What's the point of all the training, the lessons, the discipline, if we don't use it?"

"But we do use it. I mean... we saved this city twice as it is... the first time from everyone getting poisoned to death, and the second time from everyone getting vaporized by space aliens." Donnie reminded him.

"I know, but... there's more out there than just them, Donnie. There's criminals everywhere in this city, just waiting to prey on their next victim." Leo said, looking out upon the streets below as the sky continued to darken.

"Leo... do you remember how big this city is? We may be mutants, but we can't be everywhere at once. Like Splinter was telling us... it's just too much. It's not realistic. I mean, mathematically, if you make a ratio of the four of us against the average population at any given time in New York City, that would make-"

"I get it, I get it..." Leo sighed. "I know you're right, Donnie. I just need to shake this feeling, I guess."

April finally reached the government building where the conference was being held. She took in a deep breath, heading inside. She took out a pen and notepad, as well as her tripod, setting everything up as people began to gather. Soon, a gentleman with a pale complexion ascended to the podium, neat as a pin. He seemed to be in his mid-thirties, and wore a calm expression.

"Thank you all for attending tonight. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Grayson Roberts. I'm sure you are all anticipating great change to come with this coming election. I will tell you now, the change has already come. We just need to wait a little longer before it happens." April made sure she was covering his speech, some of the attendees clapping after making an announcement that he was running for state Governor, an ambitious move for someone of his age- especially for someone who seemed to have come out of thin air. Questions began to be asked by the press when he concluded, April waiting for a good opportunity as she listened to some of the other reporters present.

"Mr. Roberts, how do you plan to address the school budget?"

"Sir, what is your view on infrastructure?"

"How will you handle the issues surrounding taxes, Mr. Roberts?"

Finally, after about a half a dozen questions, April got his attention. "Mr. Roberts, what plans do you have in place to combat city crime rates?"

Grayson hesitated for a moment, smiling a bit. "If I'm not mistaken... are you April O'Neil from Channel Six?"

"I am, sir." April rose her brows, amazed that he recognized her.

Grayson nodded for a moment. "So, are you the same April who has actively supports the Movement for Mutants campaign?"

A few murmurs rippled through the room at this. "Yes, sir, I do support that."

"Earlier, you worked as a computer programmer for the high risk criminal Baxter Stockman, am I correct? The very same man who robbed several major banks of millions of dollars and used that money for terrorist activities?" He pursed his lip as April's smile faded.

"Sir... I had no idea at the time that Mr. Stockman was engaging in these activities-"

"Actually, I'll give you credit on the second one. It's no doubt that Mr. Stockman was a manipulative man- and you have, on several occasions, publicly shamed him. But the other issue I have, Ms. O'Neil... is your involvement with mutants. Notably, those... turtles. Mutants are- and will continue to be- an understated threat to society. They are unpredictable, they are not integrated into our public education system- they're not on the same page as humans on many levels. What does this conclude? Their values, their morals, and their priorities are not the same as ours. That is the foundation for chaos."

April cleared her throat. "Sir, if I may interject, you do remember that our city was saved by a major terrorist threat on not one, but two occasions, by-"

"For years, the presence of mutants across the globe have spelled

trouble, at times even mass destruction. Placing mutants among the general population is like placing a loaded gun in the hand of a child. So much power, but they do not know how to control it. This can be dangerous, not just for themselves, but for us, as well. So Ms. O'Neil, to answer your question, I plan to set aside a modest budget to combat crime by combating those related to terrorist organizations... and also, to safeguarding the citizens of New York from the threat of mutants. Proving that they are just as responsible for their crimes as non-mutants are will be the first step in making this city safer. Crimes happen every day, Ms. O'Neil... but not on the scale in these recent years."

"But sir, you don't understand! The turtles aren't committing the crimes, they are the ones trying to save-"

"No further questions." One of Roberts' men came to the podium to announce quickly, the two exchanging a glance and nodding.

"Thank you everyone for your attendance. I hope you will all come out to vote in September and allow me the great honor of leading this city to greatness as your next Governor!" The room was filled with applause as he smiled, glancing at April for a moment before descending the podium. He wore a calm, but uneasy smile, the sound of applause drowning out in April's ears as her mind reeled. No matter how many times she replayed what had just happened, she could not make any sense of his words.

And here we leave it, readers! So, what do you think so far? As we set this story up for bigger events, please leave your thoughts in a review and let us know what you think. Thank you for reading, and please stay tuned for a new update!

2. Pernicious Party

Good morning, readers! I hope you enjoyed the first chapter of this story, and that you are anticipating what comes next! We've already had a few spooks, but this is only the beginning! Are you ready for more? Please enjoy this next update!

Later that night, Leo sat in front of the television, watching the news report with deep intensity. It was like he was in a trance, his eyes never flickering from the screen. Photos of missing children faded in and out on the screen, their name and physical characteristics spelled out below each picture.

Leo studied each of them, always taking this time to refresh his memory. It was possible that their kidnapper had made them change their appearance to keep them hidden even in plain sight. He had to be vigilant if he was going to have any chance of saving even one of them.

He was so deep in thoughts that he stopped paying attention, nearly missing the last photo in the reel. When it caught his eye, he suddenly sat up, his large hands digging into the arms of his chair. As he leaned forward, he gaped at the television.

The photo was a group shot of himself and his brothers as children.

He rubbed at his eyes fervently before looking at the screen again. The photo was no longer there, instead showing Amelia Smith again.

"Must be the fatigue." Leo thought to himself, slumping back in the chair as he sighed. "Maybe I DO need to chill..."

The following morning, Leo decided to focus on clearing his head as he trained with his brothers. Even after they called it a day, he persisted.

As the remaining turtles ate some breakfast bagels, they looked up when April suddenly came into the room, and was beyond frustrated.

"I cannot believe that man!" She exclaimed, her bags plopping onto a nearby couch. "I knew I should have dug into him more before attending that conference!"

"Uh... hi April." Donnie smiled nervously.

"Grayson Roberts can NOT be elected for state Governor. He just publicly announced his opposition for the mutant community in the same breath he announced throwing his hat in!" April exclaimed.

"What?" Raphael curled his lip.

"April, that's so wrong..." Mikey shook his head. "Why would he just throw away a perfectly good hat?" His two brothers looked over at him flatly, Donnie pinching the bridge of his nose.

"Look, April... I can see that you're angry, but there's always going to be people who don't like us. We've learned to just let it roll off our shells."

"Normally, that is a great attitude, Donnie, but not when it's someone who could potentially hold political power." April sighed, sinking down. "I'm starving, by the way... mind if I have a bite of that?"

At this, Donnie's spine straightened, clearing his throat. "Of course, please, help yourself."

"You know Donnie, if she eats that side of the bagel, it'll be as if you kissed her." Raph said as he and Mikey snickered. Donnie seethed at them, and a moment later, he whipped out a taser from his belt, shocking Raph's arm.

"Hey, knock that off!" Raph exclaimed, Mikey nearly falling out of his seat from laughter.

"He got you good, Raph!"

"I'll get you worse if you don't stop laughing." Raph said, cracking his knuckles.

"We just can't have a peaceful morning, can we?" Donnie rolled his eyes, placing the taser back on his belt.

"Guys, seriously, aren't you worried about some crazy mob hunting you guys down?" April frowned.

"I think we can defend ourselves, but thanks for worrying." Raph smirked.

"Like how you defended yourself against Donnie's taser?" Mikey snickered, ducking when Raph swung at him with an open palm, meaning to smack the back of his head.

"What is going on in here?" Leo asked as he headed in. "Oh, hey April." He gave her a nod.

"Just the usual, these two acting like knuckleheads." Donnie said flatly.

"We need to be worrying about what's happening out there." April said.

"Couldn't agree more." Leo replied. "Have you finished those upgrades to the surveillance systems yet, Donnie?"

"Just about, I've been making some tweaks to the heat signature system and high res streaming." Donnie said.

"Good. We can't just be on the lookout for the Foot Clan anymore. Shredder may be down for the count, but it's given other criminals opportunity to take to the streets. Make sure you've got that precinct radio receiver up and running by tonight. That's when these goons like to strike." Leo said.

"Leo." April got up, following him as he headed out of the room. "Look, I know you have a lot on your plate right now, but we have a bigger problem. The conference I went to last night, this jerk Grayson Roberts wants to shut down any supporting campaigns and groups for mutants. We can't forget how mutants were shamed by the government in the past- I mean, that registration act..." She sighed. "We've been making progress over the last decade but if people elect guys like this, we're going to go right back to square one-

"April." Leo placed a light hand on her shoulder. "I know how you feel. I've been struggling with... things myself. There's so much out

there that we can't control..." He sighed. "I guess we both need to stop working ourselves up."

"Well... I'm going to do everything I can to make sure this guy is slammed. I'm going to dig up anything I can." April said.

"Hey guys, look at this! There's going to be a festival in the city this week! Costumes encouraged!" Mikey suddenly exclaimed as he came into the room.

"Isn't it a little early for dressing up? Halloween isn't for another four months." Donnie commented.

"Do we really have time for a festival, Mikey?" Leo asked.

"Aww come on, guys, don't you ever want to relax and mingle with people like, y'know, we're normal?"

"I don't think anything will make us look 'normal', especially dweeb costumes." Raph said.

"You know what I mean!"

"Well this COULD be a good idea actually." Donnie mused, much to everyone's surprise. "This could be a good way to get up close and personal with the people we defend on a daily basis. Besides, maybe that kidnapper that Leo's been obsessed with will be there. There's going to be lots of kids..."

Leo perked up at this, glancing over at Donnie. "That's a good point." He stood up a bit straighter then. "Alright, we'll go."

"Yes!" Mikey beamed, fist pumping the air. "Popcorn, and cotton candy, and rides, and balloons-"

"Hey, what's up, reptilians?" A voice suddenly sounded as they turned, Casey Jones striding up to them. "April, taking off from work for once, I see."

She rolled her eyes playfully. "At least I work SOME of the time."

"Hey, all work and no play makes Casey really, really antsy." He lifted

his hockey mask. "So you guys are going to that festival, huh? Count me in."

"Well, he's going to blow our cover for sure." Donnie said flatly.

"He's not what we need to worry about. We need to worry about how the hell we're going to find costumes in our size." Raph said.

"Wait..." April smiled then. "What if... this IS the costume?"

"I had no idea air could be a costume." Mikey scratched his head.

"No, you guys can go to the festival as yourselves, and people will think you're already in costume!" April exclaimed.

"If it gets me out of wearing something potentially humiliating, I'm in." Raph smirked.

"Aww, but that's no fun." Mikey frowned. "But I guess getting to go is good enough for me." He shrugged.

"Besides, a costume might hinder us if we need to scam." Leo says, patting his brother on the shoulder. "So when IS this festival exactly?"

"Well, on this paper, it says it's tomorrow." Mikey said, Donnie looking at it.

"No Mikey, that's the theme, Tomorrow Land. The date is... today! Look, June 20th!" Donnie exclaimed. "This thing starts in an hour!"

"Good thing we're not getting costumes..." Raph snorted with amusement.

Later, the group emerged from the sewers, a little ways off from the public eye of course. Before long, they merged seamlessly into the gathering crowd. As predicted, no one seemed to pay them any notice, under the assumption that they were in costume.

"Oh man, this is awesome!" Mikey squealed, his eyes darting everywhere as he took everything in.

"Ugh, too many people." Raph complained as he kept getting bumped

into.

"Guys, remember why we're here. We're not here to play games, we-Mikey!" Leo rolled his eyes as he looked over to see his brother had already made a beeline for the games.

"Come on, Leo, I'm winning!" Mikey beamed, the gentleman running the stand handing Mikey a plush when he finished playing.

"Hey, want to go on the love boat, April?" Casey wiggled his brows as April rolled her eyes.

"I think I'll pass." She replied flatly.

Donnie cleared his throat then. "We should decide how we're going to navigate the area."

"Dude, it's a festival, not a field trip. Let's just chill." Casey said.

"We are not going to 'just chill.' We are here for an important reason-why are YOU here?" Donnie responded.

"Because you're my pals?" He shrugged.

As the pair bickered, April stopped when she noticed a balloon stand. "Speaking of 'pals,' Casey, I should have given you a good beating for your prank last night." As she said this, Raph was over by the strength bell, taking the mallet and easily ringing the bell with one swing. The surrounding people were impressed, complimenting his skills and "costume."

"I knew you liked it." Casey snickered.

"Uh no, I didn't, and I didn't like the balloon popping trick, either. Seriously, you have too much time on your hands, Casey Jones." April huffed.

"Balloon popping trick?" Casey rose a brow.

"Yes. All the red balloons that you had floating in the alleyway? How you managed to get them to pop all at once is a mystery to me."

"Uh... that does sound like a neat trick, but I did not pull that one off. Although, I could pop-..." He leaned over to whisper in her ear, to which she shoved him aside.

"Casey, that is revolting!"

"April, come on, it's a joke!" Casey exclaimed.

"Well it's NOT funny!" She hissed.

"Both of you are making a scene, knock it off." Leo said lowly. "Listen. I'm going to reel Mikey in. Looks like Raph is coming back. The four of you walk around and get back to me if you notice anything." Leo said as Raph approached with a prize, cracking his knuckles. "Raph, I'm going to find Mikey. I'm leaving you in charge of the group."

"Sweet." Raph nodded, turning to the others. "Hear that, ladies? I'm hungry. Let's grab a bite."

Donnie interjected then. "Shouldn't we be keeping watch for-"

"Uh, I think Leo just left ME in charge. And I say, we get a bite first." Raph said before moving past him to the concession stands. Donnie sighed, shaking his head before reluctantly following him.

April was about to go after them when Casey stopped her. "Hey, listen. I'm sorry about before. I was just joking, okay?"

"Fine... just, try to help me out here, okay?" April asked.

"You got it, sprocket." He gave her a wink, making her smirk as she rolled her eyes playfully.

"Seriously though, how did you pull that trick off?" April asked.

"I already told you. After I threw the water balloon at you and stormed off, that was it." Casey said.

"So you're not going to fess up?" April gave him a look.

"I'm not lying, April. There were no balloons in that alleyway except for the water balloons in my back pack."

April decided to just drop it, getting on line. They each got some lunch and snacks, the four looking for a table. They found one, about to sit down, nearly being cut off by someone.

"Ah... Ms. O'Neil." Grayson said, nodding lightly as he smiled. "Forgive me. I can see you have some company. You can have this table. I'll eat elsewhere."

April cleared her throat when she saw him, nodding in return. "Thank you." She said warily.

"I must say this... I apologize if I offended you in any way, last night. I have a great amount of opposition... it's important for someone in my position to establish... a good stance on things. We could use some more hard working youth like yourself."

"I appreciate that, Mr. Roberts." April said, but she still wasn't showing much enthusiasm.

"Perhaps one day we can have a nice talk over some coffee... clear the air." Grayson said, pursing his lip. "Until then... let me just say this. You've built a good reputation for yourself, Ms. O'Neil. As someone who requires the same... I suggest you think twice about the company you keep." He glanced at Casey for a moment, who curled his lip.

"What're you getting at?" Casey asked, April hissing him to keep quiet.

"Casey Jones... three time offender for battery assault and not unfamiliar with juvenile prison." Grayson pursed his lip. "Sounds like someone who would put a smear on someone like April's pristine record."

"Mr. Roberts, all three of those charges were dropped." April commented as Raph and Donnie approached, keeping a distance between the group as they listened in. "Casey tries to fight criminals, not be one himself."

Grayson chuckled. "Well, I can't say I'm surprised, Ms. O'Neil." His eyes flickered to the pair of turtles a short distance away. "I think I've taken up enough of your time... your elaborately 'costumed' friends

are waiting on you. But as I was saying... I'm not surprised. If you're willing to run the streets with four mutant reptiles doing... who knows what..." He looked her up and down for a moment. "... then Mr. Jones is surely just a playful fling in comparison."

April had to take hold of Casey's arm as he hissed, his jaw rigid as his gaze burned. Donnie clenched his fists, but remained silent as Raph simply narrowed his eyes. April straightened up, looking at Grayson defiantly.

"Thank you, Mr. Roberts." She said simply. "Thank you for revealing what kind of person you are. I'll be sure to make my statements based on that fact."

Grayson chuckled lightly, leaning in a bit. "There are many layers to me, Ms. O'Neil. You've barely scratched the surface. You have a nice day now." He nodded, turning to walk away.

As he did, Casey shook his head. "That asshole is lucky I don't bust his skull in-

"Casey, there's children around." Donnie said, exhaling sharply. "However, I would have to concur with you on that."

"I'm assuming that was the guy you were telling us about?" Raph asked April. When she nodded, he let out a grumble. "Lucky for him, we can't very well beat his face in public."

"He'd look better with a couple black eyes, am I right?" Casey snickered, nudging April lightly with his elbow.

"No. We're going to get him in a better way. He thinks that me being friends with you guys is smearing my reputation? Well, we're going to return him the favor." April replied.

Meanwhile, Leo sighed when he finally spotted Mikey getting some cotton candy, starting to head over to him. "Mikey. Mikey!" Leo called him, his younger brother beaming.

"Look Leo, cotton candy! Wow, this stuff is good!" Mikey piped.

"We do not have time for you to be playing around. We have work to

do." Leo said lowly when he approached him.

"I can still eat this though, right?" Mikey asked, to which Leo rolled his eyes.

"Sure. Just, come on, will you?" Leo replied. "We have to catch up to the others, they're probably wondering-"

"Caleb!" A woman shouted, seeming to be looking frantically as she weaved through the crowd. "Caleb, answer me!"

Leo stopped, glancing back at Mikey for a moment before approaching the woman. "Excuse me, m'am?"

The woman jumped, holding her heart. "I- I'm sorry, can I help you? I really need to-"

"Are you looking for someone?" Leo asked.

"I... I'm looking for my son, I went in the back to throw something in the trash and when I turned around, he wasn't there." The woman said.

"What does he look like? We can help you look for him." Leo said.

"Oh my God, thank you, uh..." The woman dug through her purse. "Here's a picture of him. Please, take it. Uh..." She scribbled something on the back. "Here's my number if you find him." She said before turning, looking through the crowd and calling for her son.

"Let's go this way." Leo said to Mikey, who followed his brother. They went to the back of the festival, looking up and down the empty street.

"Which way, Leo?" Mikey asked as Leo narrowed his eyes, focusing. He tried to tune his hearing, a bit difficult with all the noises coming from the festival. "It's too bad we can't hop up to the rooves, but people from the festival would see us and get spooked. Alright. Let's go this way first, and circle back around."

Leo led the way, his jaw set. Could this be it? Could this be his chance to end the kidnapping spree? He shook his head at himself;

this could easily be a simple case of a kid getting sidetracked by some shiny thing at a game booth and not noticing his mom leaving.

At least, he hoped that was all it was. Of course he wanted to find the creep, but he would rather this kid be found and returned safely.

Leo made his way down the back street, remaining vigilant. Mikey followed behind him, looking around. As they passed by another side street, he did a double take, stopping when he thought he saw something. He tilted his head, glancing at Leo for a moment before sneaking down a side street. Leo continued onward, narrowing his eyes as he turned the corner. He thought he heard voices speaking quietly, able to pick up lower vibrations better than most people. He crouched down a bit, continuing to move forward.

Mikey chuckled to himself, having been distracted by a red balloon as it floated, leading him through the side streets. When he turned the corner, a smile slowly grew in his features. "Awesome!" He headed over to a pizza box with fresh pizza inside, licking his lips. "This looks totally amazing..." He said in a higher pitched voice. He was about to take a piece when gloved hands came up from the non-existent space beneath the box, Mikey widening his eyes and moving back as the individual defied the laws of physics, seeming to rise to their feet from the paper thin space between the box and the ground it sat on. Mikey was no longer smiling, silent as a Renaissance-styled clown now stood before him, smiling darkly as he held the pizza box.

"Hi there, Mikey." He motioned to the pizza box he was holding. "Looks delicious, doesn't it?"

"Uh..." Mikey glanced at the spot the box had been sitting on. "How... did you do that?"

"It's a secret." He replied. "You seem nice. Would you like a slice of pizza, Mikey?"

"How... do you know my name?" Mikey asked.

"I know everybody... because everybody knows me." His smile grew. "Go on, Mikey. Take a piece. It'll be our... secret. I promise that it's... scrumptious." He licked his lips with anticipation.

Meanwhile, Leo furrowed his brow as he reached a dead end. He sighed a bit, shaking his head. "Alright, let's head back and- Mikey? Mikey! Oh, come on! I can't go for five minutes without-..." Leo stopped, tilting his head when something caught his eye. He reached over to take something posted to the side of a building, looking at a small poster. His eyes scanned the words, shaking his head in confusion. "'Missing Child: Caleb Walters; child not found after mother lost control of vehicle just outside of the city and was found dead at the scene of the single car collision. It is still unknown how the accident occurred. Details of the child's physical description below.' Wait a second..." Leo took out the wallet photo he was given, shaking his head slowly when he realized the child in both photos were the same. "This can't be-" He stopped when he felt something buzzing, digging into his belt to retrieve his communicator. "Mikey, is that you?"

'... You're not him.'

"Hello? Who are you? Who is this?" Leo spoke into the device.

"... You're not him."

Leo reeled back as he heard the voice from right beside him, his breathing quickening as the woman from earlier now stood before him. She was no longer neat as a pin, her purse dangling from her hand as she was covered from head to toe in injuries, broken glass, a disheveled mess.

"M'am... I don't know what's going on here." Leo put his hands up. "Please, let me help you."

"You're not Caleb. Caleb isn't here, anymore." The seemingly distressed woman from earlier was eerily calm now, smiling slowly. "He's in a better place now... with us. Would you like to see that place, Leo?"

"How do you know who I am, my name-"

"There's lots of fun things there... you can see all the children just like you do on the television screen. Have you ever played an Easter egg hunt, Leo? It's my favorite game. They're all the pretty little eggs. I

love to hear their skulls crunch in my teeth like... shells... when I devour them."

"M'am... you need to stop saying what you're saying and tell me where your son is." Leo said, his expression dead serious.

"Alright." The woman replied, her sinister smile remaining. "Follow me, and I can take you to him. You see... he's floating now, like a balloon."

Mikey stared at the bone-chilling clown as he waited. "... Okay..." He got to his feet, reaching an arm out, the clown beginning to drool as its eyes stared unblinkingly. Just then, Mikey stopped, feeling something buzzing on his belt. He took out his communicator as the clown's smile slowly broke down into a scowl. "Hello?"

"Mikey, where in the heck are you and Leo? We're looking everywhere for you guys!" Donnie spoke. "I tried contacting Leo, but we had a bad connection, I think."

"Oh, hey Donnie! I just was talking to this nice clown who was going to give me some pizza! Here, let me-... hello?"

"Hello?" Donnie rose a brow.

"No, not you, he's gone."

"Who's gone?"

"The clown!"

"Mikey, stop talking to clowns and get your shell back here right now! Where is Leo?" Donnie exclaimed.

"Uh... let me go find him." Mikey said, heading down the side street. He then stopped, ran back quickly, grabbing the remaining pizza box before continuing on his way.

Meanwhile, Leo felt his heart racing as the woman began to deteriorate before him, her skin graying as car oil began to spew from her mouth. He slowly reached back to take hold of his sword, the woman lurching forward as she screeched. He clenched his teeth as

she burst into flames, slicing through the air as she nearly came upon him. He had managed to slice her in half, looking on in disbelief as the two halves continued to move individually. He backed away as the top half of the woman crawled towards him, continuing to char and burn as she did so.

"Leo, there you are!" Leo whirled around at the voice, seeing Mikey approach as he stuffed another bite of pizza into his mouth. "Donnie wants us to go back to the festival now." He wordlessly glanced over his shoulder, freezing when he saw that the horrific woman he had encountered, or any remnants of her, were all but gone. He was breathing heavily, swallowing thickly as he looked all around him.

"Where did she go?" He muttered under his breath.

"Leo, are you okay? You look like you got scared by something." Mikey asked.

"That woman was here, Mikey. The one looking for her son. She wasn't... I saw... I don't know what I saw." Leo replied.

"What are you talking about? She's back at the festival, remember?" Mikey asked.

"No. No, she was here. She's... we have to find the others, now. Come on." Leo said, striding briskly out of the alleyway.

"But Leo, what about-"

"NOW, Mikey!" Leo snapped over his shoulder, not even bothering to stop.

"Okay okay, sheesh." Mikey said. 'Can we at least finish this pizza real quick?' He groaned, shoveling the rest of it in his mouth as fast as possible, tossing the pizza box into the dumpster.

And there we have it for now! Just what is going on here? With problems stacking up against the turtles, will they be able to tackle all of them? Will April be able to stop Grayson from becoming governor and condemning mutants? Stay tuned for the next update! In the meantime, please leave a review with your

thoughts!

3. What Is Lost, It Finds

Good morning and happy Friday, readers! I am back with some more exciting scenes for you to read! Are you ready to see what's next? I do hope you enjoy!

As Mikey was in the process of catching up to his brother, Leo was trying to shake off what had happened. He did not know what to make of what he just experienced. Some sort of mind trickery was at play, and he had to figure out who was behind it. He kept replaying when he had first encountered the distressed mother desperately searching for her son, only to see her deteriorating on all levels after making an unsettling discovery. A cold chill surged through him, focusing on just getting back to his remaining brothers and trying to make some sense of this.

"Bro, I don't know if we're going to find this kid." Mikey said when he finally caught up to Leo. "There's a lot of weird stuff going on."

"I don't care... I will not let another one find themselves in harm's way, not when I'm right here!" Leo insisted. "How can this be happening when I'm right here?"

"Hey, whoa, calm down..." Mikey frowned when he saw how upset Leo was getting, grabbing his shoulder. "Don't beat yourself up, Leo. He'll turn up."

"Mikey, we're not talking about some toy or something. This is a child. Just... come on. I'll explain what I can when we find the others." Leo grabbed his arm, making their way back to the heart of the festival.

Donnie was looking over a scanning device he was making some tweaks to, Casey drumming his fingers on a picnic table and yawning loudly. April bit her lip as she paced about nervously, and Raph leaned up against the side of an attraction, his arms crossed. He lifted his head when he noticed Leo approaching with Mikey.

"About time you two boneheads got back here. Where the hell were

you?" Raph asked.

"Mikey is going to vouch for me on this." Leo said, holding up the picture of Caleb, as well as the poster. "A woman just approached us, claiming she was looking for her son. She gave me this picture, telling us she lost him when she went to the trash bins on the back streets. I'm looking around, and I find this poster." Leo said, April taking the poster to read over.

"One of my colleagues covered this story. Leo, there's been an Amber alert on Caleb Walters for three days. His mother is dead. Investigators said she lost control of her car and completely wrecked it on the interstate." April said.

"Do you have a picture of the woman?" Leo asked her.

"Uh... hang on. Let me see if I can pull anything up from the database..." She said as she got on her phone.

"Leo, there's no way that the woman who spoke to you was this child's mother if she's dead. That's impossible." Donnie said. "It doesn't take rocket science to know that-"

"I'm not making this up, Donnie!" Leo exclaimed.

"Alright, alright... look. There must be some logical explanation." Donnie replied.

Casey threw his hands up. "Guys, can we just ditch this joint? We're not Scooby-Doo and the gang here, alright? Someone's just probably playing some prank and-"

"This is not a joke, Casey." Leo snapped at him. "You want to be taken seriously by the people in this city? Well, so do I. The only way that's going to happen, the only way people are going to stop getting hurt is if we do something about it."

"Hey... look at this, you guys!" Mikey smiled. "There's a balloon in this picture."

"Mikey, no one cares about a stupid balloon. Will you stop acting like a two-year-old for once?" Raph rolled his eyes.

"Oh my God..." April breathed, her eyes widening as she held up her phone. "Mikey is right."

They all turned to look at her, brows raising. "April, do you think maybe there was something in that ice cream you ate?" Donnie asked.

"Look. This is exactly like the balloons I saw in the alleyway last night." She held up the photo of the crash coverage. In the background next to the car wreckage, there was a single red balloon in the photo. Leo took the phone, scrolling down to where photos of Caleb and his mother were shown.

"That's her. That's the woman I saw just before. I know it. Look, Mikey." Leo said, the smaller turtle craning his head.

"Yeah, looks like her. And I saw a balloon too! I kind of got distracted before, but it led me to some delicious pizza and a weird clown guy." He nodded. Leo slowly looked at him.

"Did you just say you saw a weird... clown?" He asked.

"Yeah... he somehow knew my name. Actually, funny thing, after Donnie called on the communicator, he was gone." Mikey shrugged.

The group exchanged glances, wordlessly registering what Mikey had just told them.

Back at the turtles' underground abode, Leo watched as Donnie tried to tap into any surveillance devices active in that area. "There. Take a look at that angle. Okay. Stop. That's me about to turn that corner. That's where I found the poster. Okay, keep going. Any second now, the woman should be heading to where I am." As the seconds passed, his brows furrowed. "Where is she?"

"I don't see anyone, Leo. Wait, here comes someone... it's Mikey." Donnie replied.

"No. Something's not right. Go back a bit. She came before Mikey found me."

"Leo, you saw just like I did, no one came before Mikey found you. Or, maybe she came through another way-"

"There was no other way, Donnie, it's a dead end. I know what I saw."

"There's no one, Leo." Donnie frowned, glancing at his brother. Leo exhaled tensely, shifting his weight on his feet anxiously for a moment. "Mikey, come here for a minute." When Mikey approached, Leo nodded to the screen. "Tell Donnie which way you went when you saw this... clown."

"Uh... down that way." Mikey pointed. Donnie tapped into the nearest surveillance camera, which luckily pointed right where Mikey had been standing when he saw the sinister figure. Donnie then played the footage, Raph approaching as they watched the large computer screen intently. "Huh. That's weird."

"No, that's just you." Raph said as they watched Mikey come into view, Leo nudging Raph at the snark comment.

"What's wrong, Mikey?" Leo asked.

"I don't see the balloon."

"What is with you and balloons today?" Donnie huffed with annoyance.

"I saw this balloon, that's what led me to the pizza! See, there it is!" He pointed to the screen. However, he quieted when they saw the pizza float into the air on the screen, Mikey seeming to speak to no one. "Hey... where's the clown guy?"

"In your head, maybe?" Raph asked, Leo resolving to just ignore his larger brother's comments.

"No. It's just like how we weren't able to see Caleb's mother. Now this clown Mikey saw isn't there, either."

"I can see Mikey hallucinating things, but you, Leo?" Donnie rose a brow.

"Donnie, can you tell if this footage has been altered in any way?" Leo asked, Donnie's fingers moving in quick succession as he typed away.

"Hm... nope, all the encoding looks normal." Donnie pursed his lip.

"Then how do you explain how something both Mikey and I saw just not being there?" Leo asked.

"I have no idea, Leo, I wasn't there-"

"Well, find out." Leo stood up straighter, turning to head away from the computer. "April." He approached her, Casey sitting beside her as he played a game on his phone. "Got anything?"

"Well..." April bit her lip. "One of my resources messaged me back... they looked at the handwriting on the back of the photo of Caleb, and... it's definitely a match to his mother. But this makes no sense. This woman died three days ago." She shook her head.

"Maybe she has a twin or something." Casey said, putting his feet up as he shrugged.

April rolled her eyes. "Twins don't share the same handwriting."

Casey looked as if he had just learned something that blew his mind. "They don't? Wow... well maybe she just forges handwriting really good?"

"Why would someone go through all that trouble?" Raph snorted a bit. "Maybe she's just faking her death for- I don't know, insurance or something."

"She wouldn't show up in public if that were the case." Leo said. He was at a bit of a loss here. Nothing made sense about this. "I'm going to take a walk. Donnie, keep trying to see if you can find anything." He said, heading out of the area.

As he did, April glanced over, raising a brow. "Casey, what are you doing?"

"Ordering a pizza under me. I get the discount for being an employee, and I'm assigning the delivery to me, so I get paid for it." He smirked. "I love this system."

"Seriously?" April couldn't help but snicker at this.

"I wouldn't mind a tip though..." Casey winked.

"Keep dreaming." April said, rolling her eyes. Donnie exhaled slowly, staring flatly at his computer screen as he listened.

"Hey, Red." Casey said. "I did want to thank you for earlier."

"What do you mean?" April blinked.

"You know... for defending my honor to that jerk at the fair." Casey replied.

"I was only saying the truth. I don't want anyone saying anything about you that isn't true." April said.

"Keep telling yourself that." Casey smiled. "I know deep down you have a soft spot for me."

April sighed, getting up. "Like I said... keep dreaming." She said before heading over to Donnie's lab area to look alongside him at his computer screens.

Meanwhile, Leo sighed as he wandered through the sewers, engaged in deep thought as his feet shuffled lightly against the ground. He came across a series of street drains, looking up as the light from above filtered through them like moonbeams. Evening was setting now, the side streets falling quiet. He tried to remember what Splinter had told him and his brothers, deciding that if anyone's words would bring him any sort of clarity, it would be his. Deciding he should go back and discuss these happenings further with the others, he turned, heading back in the direction he came. When a low sound reached him, however, he stopped, glancing over his shoulder. He thought he heard a low whisper, quietly turning on his heel to wander towards the sound. He narrowed his eyes as he made it past the street drains, entering the darker portion of the sewer. He wanted to call out, but wondered if perhaps it was a late night maintenance worker. He came to a slow stop, lingering to see if anything more could be heard. He definitely heard voices, but could not make out what they were saying.

Suddenly, the sound of a young girl screaming filled the space.

Leo clenched his teeth, about to charge into the darkness. Before he

could, he widened his eyes when the source of the scream ran into the light, Leo's heart skipping a beat.

He had seen her on the news. He had seen her "missing" poster in the streets.

"Amelia?!" Leo called, the girl trembling as she stared at the ground. "Amelia... my name is Leo. I'm not going to hurt you, I'm here to help, okay?" He held his hands up, lowering a bit as he approached her. Upon closer inspection, he noticed blood dripping near her left foot. He gently took the child, drawing her a bit more into the light. What he saw made him hiss with shock, drawing back.

The child's arm was gone, and was bleeding profusely.

Leo barely had time to take this in, grabbing the child quickly when a pair of glowing eyes appeared in the darkness.

"Show yourself!" Leo shouted as he unsheathed his sword, holding it in one hand and the child in his other arm.

"Hiya, Leo. See? I've given you what you've been looking for. You should be thanking me."

"I said, show yourself." Leo demanded, his eyes narrowed.

"I'll let you in on a little secret. Like I already said... I've given you what you've been looking for. Although... she would have been whole... if you wandering down here hadn't distracted her. See... I wanted to give her a world of fun and prizes, but she escaped. It's the smart ones that give me the hardest time. She had almost made it out... but I guess overgrown reptiles are scarier than dancing clowns. I'll have to remember that."

"Stop talking nonsense and come out where I can see you!" Leo said firmly. What the voice had said disturbed him, looking down at the child for a moment.

"I guess you can consider the arm as payment... I missed out on a nice turtle soup dinner, earlier. So thank you, Leo... at least you spared me a little taste. A nicely salted one, too."

"Come out of the shadows or I will come after you!" Leo shouted. "You come after these kids, you come after my family, you're going to deal with me!"

"Well aren't you just an A class hero? Do you like Superman, Leo? See, he's a hero... he has powers... and he can float. I can make you float too, Leo. I can give you exactly what you're looking for."

"Like I would ever work with a sick freak like you!" Leo shouted, thrusting his sword forward. A screech was heard, Leo widening his eyes as the weapon was torn out of his hand. He reeled back, staring into the darkness as the screeching died down, replaced by low, sinister laughter. Just then, the sword was thrown back into the light, blood upon it as it clattered on the ground.

"Just as annoying as he was. Turtles have always rubbed me the wrong way. Well... I think we've played for long enough. You'd better watch that big shell on your back, Leo... there's all sorts of things down here... and now I am too."

"Hey. Hey, get back here!" Leo shouted, about to go after him. The laughter faded as the perpetrator moved farther and farther into the darkness. Leo stopped when he heard a small whimper, looking down at Amelia.

Master Splinter's words came to mind. Priority. This girl had to be taken to a hospital, and now.

There was no time to get the others. Leo quickly wrapped something around the girl's arm to keep it from gushing out more blood. Amelia was pale, going further into shock. The turtle cradled her, running as fast as he could in the direction of the hospital.

Finally, he shoved up on the manhole cover that was closest to the hospital, hauling himself and Amelia out. When he burst in, the people inside stopped, some gasping at the sight of him.

"Please, I need help, this girl is badly hurt." Leo said. A security guard caught sight of him, whipping his gun out.

"Freeze, don't move!" The man shouted.

"I'm not here to harm anyone!" He held Amelia out. "This girl is dying, if she doesn't get help soon, she's not going to make it." When there was a hesitation, he bit his lip. "Please!"

Thankfully, a nearby nurse held herself together, though she still shook with nerves. She reached out, taking Amelia from Leo and placed her on a stretcher. Another two nurses gasped at Amelia's state, giving Leo suspicious and fearful glances as they assisted. Leo thought gravely that perhaps they suspected him of being the one who did this.

"Her name's Amelia Smith." Leo said before hurrying out, disappearing into the night.

When he returned to the shadows, he shut his eyes tightly for a moment before reopening them, looking at his blood stained hands. He curled his fists, moving quickly to head back underground as it began to rain.

Well, we end this chapter on a bit of a darker note. Will Leo catch Amelia's attacker? Will she survive? Find out these answers and more in the next update! Thank you again for reading, and please leave a review with your thoughts in the meantime. See you soon!

4. What Was Found, Is Lost

Good afternoon, everyone! I hope you're having a great weekend, and that you are ready for the next string of events in this story! Thank you to everyone who has supported it thus far, your words, follows and favorites have been greatly appreciated! So, without further ado, please enjoy this chapter!

Back in the turtles' living space, Leo's mind was in a fog, sounds and sights seeming to meld together. The sound of Mikey's laughter as he and Casey played a video game blurred, April watching while Donnie advised Mikey on how to play his character more effectively. Raph laughed as he rapidly pressed on the buttons of his controller, relentless in trying to outdo his younger brother. Leo's head was bowed, his gaze pointed towards the ground. Before he approached the couch, he felt someone suddenly take his arm, snapping him out of his stupor as Splinter held one of his bloody hands up to inspect it a bit closer.

"My son... what happened?" Splinter asked after a few moments.

Leo finally looked at his father. "I was just wandering around, and... I found her. That girl that was missing, Amelia Smith. Her attacker spoke to me, but I didn't get a good look at their face. I lost them. Amelia... I had to help her."

Splinter rose his brows. "The fact that the child was found is good news indeed. But, my son... something tells me that this is nothing to celebrate. Is she-... will she be alright?"

"She's alive, if that's what you're asking, but... her arm..." Leo's voice faded, holding up his bloody hands. "... it was like something had-..." Leo shuddered at the memory. "I got her to a hospital, but..."

"Leonardo, she is in good hands, now. That is all that matters." Splinter replied.

Just then, after Mikey and Raph switched off their video game console, the orange masked turtle did a double take, smiling when he

noticed his brother had returned. "Hey, Leo!" He hopped down, heading over to him. "Leo, I totally just kicked Casey's butt in..." He stopped when Leo turned, seeing the blood on his hands. "Leo?" His voice quieted. "Why do you have blood on your hands?"

Leo sighed, closing his eyes for a moment. "Where is Donnie?"

"Leo, are you hurt? Did someone attack you?"

"Where is Donnie, Mikey?" Leo asked firmly.

Mikey quieted, clearing his throat. "I'll go get him." He frowned deeply, heading back where he came.

Donnie came barreling in a minute later, stopping when he saw Leo. "Oh for-... Mikey made out like you were completely drenched in your own blood..." Donnie said, rolling his eyes a bit as he sat in front of Leo.

"Not mine..." Leo muttered.

"Clearly... are you okay?" Donnie cleared his throat when Leo said nothing, silently placing a bowl of water down, taking out some damp cloths to clean him up with.

Splinter frowned as he watched this, listening to Raph shouting loudly from the lounge and laughing.

"I body slammed you, Jones." Raph smirked, Casey snickering as he rolled his eyes.

"Maybe I should actually try, next time." He replied.

"Raphael." Splinter said his son's name as he approached. Raph glanced back before jumping to his feet.

"Yes, sensei?" Raph asked, his full height making Casey and April look like dwarves in comparison.

"Your brother needs you." Was all he said before heading out of the lounge. Raph rose a brow, hopping over the couch and heading to where the others were. When he saw the back of Donnie as he took a

damp, bloodied cloth, he hissed, storming over.

"What happened?" He demanded.

"Leo found one of those kids on the missing posters... her kidnapper apparently..." Donnie cleared his throat. "He amputated her arm."

Everyone fell silent, April putting a hand to her mouth as she overheard the last bit. "Leo, where did you find her?" She asked.

"Tunnels. Quarter mile from here." He replied quietly as Donnie got up to dispose of the bloody water. Casey fell unusually silent, his expression dark before he took his hockey stick, smacking it against the wall and nearly breaking it in half. They all looked at him, his jaw tense.

"Where is this shithead?" Casey asked. "I'm going to beat the piss out of him."

"Lost him. I had to get Amelia to the hospital or she would have died from the blood loss." Leo replied before glancing up. "I want you to beef up the security equipment down that entire strip, Donnie. That freak is still out there somewhere."

"On it." Donnie replied, getting up to go over to his lab area. Raph stared at Leo with a serious expression, exhaling slowly.

"I'm going with him." Raph said, Leo looking up at him. "If this guy is that dangerous, none of us should be alone."

Leo nodded. "Thank you, Raph."

Raph gave him a nod in return. "Donnie, wait up."

April slowly sat down, taking a moment to process this information. "Leo, where is she now?" Leo told her which hospital he had brought her to. "I'm going to get her parents' contact information, give them a call... see what kind of condition she's in." She got up.

"I'll come with you." Casey said, following her. At this, Donnie briefly glanced over at them, shaking his head for a moment to resume concentration on his current activity.

"I'll keep you guys posted." April said, Splinter giving her a small nod of thanks as she and Casey headed out. "That poor girl..." April said once they were out the door. "I feel horrible for Leo, finding her like that."

"Yeah well, you can say 'poor asshole' when I crack that guy's skull in." Casey said rather darkly.

"Casey, don't do anything rash... besides, we want him behind bars, not six feet under."

He huffed a bit. "Even in prison, the ones who hurt kids aren't treated well by other prisoners."

"I suppose you have a point." They walked a bit longer, eventually reaching the hospital. There were police in the area, taking statements from the staff present at the time Leo had arrived. April approached, moving past people to get inside. She and Casey went up to the front desk, getting the receptionist's attention. "Excuse me, could you tell me the room where Amelia Smith is being kept?" She asked.

"M'am, only family is- wait a second... you're April O'Neil for Channel Six." The receptionist rose her brows. "Here, this is where she is..." The woman scribbled on a piece of paper. "ICU is down the hall and to the left. That poor child could use some coverage, maybe people will donate more to her family if you make a report."

"Thank you." April said, hurrying down the hall as Casey followed her. She glanced on the paper, stopping to peek in one of the rooms. She stopped when she heard the sound of sobbing, seeing a couple inside as they hovered near a bed. April's heart sank when the mother moved back enough to reveal a small child, a steady beep sounding from the heart monitor. April's brows furrowed deeply, able to see that one of her arms had been reduced to a stump, the wrappings stained with her blood. Her breath hitched as a doctor approached, apologizing quietly to the parents as he slowly covered the child with a blanket. April shakily moved back, looking at Casey with a somber expression.

"April, is she-..." Casey hissed, shutting his eyes when April nodded

wordlessly. "This is going to kill Leo. And I'm going to kill the one who did this. Come on, Red. We need to go." April could only nod, trying to keep from crying. As they made their way down the corridor, Casey glanced at her, reaching to wrap a comforting arm around her shoulders. It was rare when he wasn't trying to bust her chops or tried to be flirty with her. As he noticed her bottom lip beginning to tremble, he stopped, taking her shoulders and turning her to face him. "Listen, April. We're going to get this fucker. This isn't going to happen again. There was nothing else we could have done at this point. Leo hauled his ass here. I just hope they got to see her alive."

"Me too." April replied with a trembling voice, swallowing the lump in her throat as she took a moment to compose herself. "Let's just go back."

As they entered the main lobby, the receptionist noticed them walking by, looking up.

"Ms. O'Neil? Are you alright?" She then saw her expression. "Oh..." She clicked her tongue. "She didn't make it, did she?" April shook her head, quietly thanking her for her help. She was about to head out of the hospital when the receptionist spoke up again. "Oh, Ms. O'Neil?"

"Yes?" April replied.

The receptionist tilted her head a bit. "Would you perhaps like to send some flowers? Or... balloons?"

April blinked at this, a funny feeling suddenly coming over her. "Excuse me?" She shook her head in confusion.

"You know, for the family." The receptionist said. "Red ones were her favorite, you know." Since when did she have a lazy eye? Was it like this the entire time? April furrowed her brows, backing up right into Casey.

"April, you okay?" Casey said, snapping her out of it. "I thought you were right behind me, I was already outside." April blinked as she looked between him and the receptionist again, the woman just looking at her as if nothing happened. She slowly smiled lightly,

staring unblinkingly at her.

"I was just asking if you needed some water." She said then, getting up to go around and place a gentle hand on her shoulder. "Go home, sweetheart. You did everything you could." She leaned in a bit then. "A good night's sleep will do the trick." She winked.

April nodded, a chill running down her spine as she cleared her throat. "Thank you. I may be back here to... assist with the investigation." She said before grabbing Casey's hand, her heart pounding as they moved quickly out of the hospital. As they did, they did not see the receptionist watching after them, licking her lips for a moment.

Back underground, April rubbed her temples tiredly as Leo sat silently. Finally, his head rose. "Thank you, April." He slowly got to his feet. "All of you, listen close." He looked around as his brothers gathered. "This will not be happening again. Not while we're still kicking. Now I have nearly two dozen missing child posters, all from this area alone. You know what the time span they all went missing is? Barely a month. We need to find this heartless freak and put him behind bars. Donnie, I want you to keep beefing up visuals- above, and below. Raph, Mikey, I want patrols along these sewers and be ready to chase if Donnie detects something. April, Casey... I need you both to be my eyes and ears above the ground. Casey, you know these streets like the back of your hand. April, you have access to a wealth of information at the push of a button. If we're going to get this guy, we need to stick together. We all have our own strengths. It's time to use them." All nodded in response, feeling more determined than ever. "We owe it to Amelia to see to it that she didn't die in vain."

As he spoke, Splinter watched on silently, nodding to himself. He had watched all four his sons grow up, and he realized then and there that Leo had truly taken the stand as a leader.

He would need to be... especially now that lives were on the line.

Later on that night, Donnie approached April. "Hey... are you alright?"

She nodded. "I will be. It was just... heartbreaking. I can't imagine what my dad would have been like if he was looking over me like that."

Donnie sat beside her as she got her things together. "Same here." He looked over. "It's a bit of a trek back to your apartment... are you sure you don't want to stay here for the night?"

"It's fine... thanks, Donnie. I have work in the morning, anyway..." She replied.

"You know, you could stay at my place if you want." Casey said as he approached the pair. "It's not as close to Channel Six as yours is, but at least it's not too far off. I have a bus stop right on my block that goes that route. Also, you wouldn't be alone."

Donnie's gaze lowered to the ground, his chest tightening for a moment as he held his tongue. "Sure, um... thank you, Casey. That will work." April responded.

Casey nodded, helping April with some of her things before the pair told the others they would be heading out. Donnie got to his feet, striding over to her. "April?"

"Yeah?" She replied, Casey raising a brow as Donnie glanced between them a bit anxiously before releasing the breath he was holding.

"Please be safe." He finally said, April smiling lightly.

"Thank you, Donnie. I will."

"Don't need to worry about that." Casey said as he gave Donnie a wary glance, turning to walk out with April.

Donnie returned his glance, not sure what it was supposed to mean. At once, the unspoken message between the three of them was all the more frustrating to him. If only April would just choose someone and be done with it, but that was a selfish thought. For all he knew, April just wanted to be friends with all of them, and there was no decision that needed to be made. Perhaps she was completely unaware of the stirrings within their hearts- or vice versa.

He shook his head, going back to his computer to get a head start on his assigned task. He decided to put this from his mind for now- after all, he knew he was the overthinking, analytical one of the bunch.

And we end it here, folks! A bit of a darker chapter- but with Pennywise involved, there's bound to be darker moments ahead. So, who can our heroes trust? Will they solve the mystery before more lives are taken? Will they be endangering themselves in the process? Be prepared for more action, more horror, more twists and turns to come! Thank you so much once again for reading, and I hope to see you next time!

5. As Above, So Below

Good afternoon, everyone! Welcome back! I hope you are up for some action today, because that is going to be seen in this update! I won't ramble for too long today, so please enjoy!

The following morning, April sat at Casey's small kitchen table, sighing as she scrolled on her phone. Amelia's face was everywhere now, her death and the manner in which she died sending shockwaves through the city. She glanced up as Casey shuffled into the room, sitting beside her. She did a double take, raising a brow.

"That's what you're having for breakfast?" She asked.

"Uh, it does say breakfast bar on the label." Casey replied.

"That's not a meal." She commented.

"And you're not my mother, Red." He responded, to which she sighed.

"Okay, starve if you want to..." She got up after finishing, placing her dishes in the sink. She was about to wash them, when Casey stopped her.

"Don't worry about that. Just because you stayed here one night doesn't mean you have to be a maid." He nodded towards the door. "Bus stop's at the end of the block. Don't want you to ruin your perfect attendance record." He chuckled a bit.

April blinked, surprised at the fact that he wasn't being so self-absorbed for once. "Thank you. I'll get my stuff then. Um... thanks again for letting me stay."

"Don't mention it. I promise, I wasn't a peeping Tom while you were asleep." He said as he smirked, to which she rolled her eyes. The typical Casey was back.

"Not like there's anything I could do about it now, anyway." She said, going down the hall to grab her things. "I'll text you later." She said before heading out, making it to the end of the block just in time to

catch the next bus.

Once she was dropped off at her stop, she glanced at her watch as she headed for the Channel Six news building. She was about to head inside when she thought she heard someone speaking through a microphone down the street. She craned her head, furrowing a brow as she walked towards the voice. When she was within good earshot, she noticed Grayson Roberts had set up a press conference just outside one of the buildings within the district, making an announcement to a growing crowd.

"... -and I am deeply saddened, deeply troubled today, ladies and gentlemen. This morning, upon reading the obituary..." He then held up a photograph of Amelia Smith. "This sweet... innocent girl had perished before the eyes of her devastated parents last night in the hospital. Imagine losing your child... only to find her beaten, broken, barely hanging onto life before finally losing it. If this does not move you, then I will show you a second picture." Grayson held up a screenshot of the hospital's surveillance, showing Leo bringing Amelia inside. "This is exactly what I feared, ladies and gentlemen. For whatever reason, this mutant, this... monster... practically threw the girl at the staff of this hospital before running off into the night like a coward. It's more likely than not that the mutant abducted the girl in the first place! And after they had enough of the frail thing, they decided to throw her onto the nearest person, like garbage, and claim themselves to be heroes. Let me ask you this, good people." He held up a picture showing a close up shot of Leo. "Is this the face of a hero to you? Does he- no... does IT deserve to be trusted after claiming this precious child's life?!"

The crowd erupted in anger, condemning Leo as they cried out in agreement with Grayson. April shook her head, not able to stand for this. She marched through the crowd, grabbing the microphone out of his hand as he looked at her in shock. "Stop!" She exclaimed, the crowd looking at her in surprise. "Leonardo... who is NOT a monster..." She shot a look at Grayson. "... is also NOT responsible for her death!"

"Then let me ask you, then... who IS, Ms. O'Neil?" Grayson asked. "These people, this child's mother and father, and Amelia herself, deserves this answer."

"And that's an answer I hope to deliver as soon as possible. Leo saved this girl."

"Saved her? That sounds like a bigger lie than what you just said about delivering us an answer. All empty promises, Ms. O'Neil... but I assure you, my promises will not be. People like Ms. O'Neil are under the delusion that mutants can coexist with us. You can see the outcome of that notion." Grayson glanced to the side at April as they began to shout at her, giving her the slyest of smiles. She stared at him angrily before looking out to the crowd.

"You may not believe me... I know this looks bad. I know that you're scared. What happened to Amelia was... there's no word for it. I want justice for her just like you all do. But pointing fingers based on prejudice, and not facts, Mr. Roberts... is not going to give Amelia, or her family justice. So, while you waste everyone's time here, I'm going to get out there and find the answer. That's not a promise, it's a guarantee." April said before shoving the microphone back into Grayson's hand, storming off as she headed back to the news building.

Later that evening, Donnie adjusted his glasses as he typed away at his computer.

"Anything on that DNA, Donnie?" Leo asked.

"Well, I was able to separate a few stray cells from the sample that aren't yours or Amelia's. We managed to find the pizza box that Mikey got from that clown in the alleyway the other day, and I was able to find a match." Donnie replied.

April growled in frustration from the couch. "That son of a bitch!" She yelled at Grayson Roberts on the television, much to the shock of the others. Footage of her earlier talk with the man was currently airing, with slanted commentary about her working with "killer mutants". "Now he's trying to twist ME into some kind of villain!" She shook her head, fuming.

"Um, you gonna be okay, April?" Donnie asked her worriedly, glancing over his shoulder. Truthfully, he wanted to take a swing at Grayson himself.

"I will be when that snake's smile is wiped off... sorry, I really can't stand that guy." April shook her head.

"Join the club." Raph scoffed.

"Who cares what some asshole says, April? Everyone knows you." Casey said.

"Because people like him can easily tarnish someone's reputation." April replied. "Someone who mingles lies with truth, manipulates."

"Maybe we should talk to him." Mikey spoke up then, the others looking at him. "Maybe if he saw we weren't bad, he wouldn't hate us so much. Remember what Sensei told us that one time? 'People fear what they do not know.' So... if he got to know us, he wouldn't be afraid anymore, right?"

"Not a bad impression of me, Michelangelo." Splinter approached, giving him a smile. "And though you have wisely heeded my words, there are some out there who refuse to learn and grow. They remain in the shadows, lurking, refusing to enlighten themselves."

"That's why he can't be elected as governor. If he is... I don't know what's going to happen to you guys." April sighed. "Although... maybe if I could just convince him somehow that there is someone else committing these crimes... he could have a change of heart. One can only hope..."

"Mikey." Leo approached. "Go do your rounds."

"You got it!" Mikey hopped up, heading out of their living area and into the tunnels.

"Uh... where's he going?" Casey asked.

"I've started a new routine. Every night, one of us is going to patrol this area of the sewer at a random time for a few hours. We need to be more proactive if we're going to catch this guy in the act. Donnie, keep working on that DNA sample." Leo said.

"Well, I should head out." Casey said as he stretched his arms. "Starting opening shift for deliveries tomorrow."

"Wait... did you get a new job?" April asked.

"No, just asked for the morning shift." He shrugged. "Wanted to free up my evenings so I can be a moral support here."

"Casey, that's... thank you." April smiled.

"Anytime. Maybe after we finish all this 'clowning around,' I can take you out somewhere, huh?" Casey said. Splinter glanced over, noticing that Donnie's quick typing had stopped abruptly.

"Uh... sure, I guess?" April chuckled. "Where has this Casey Jones been all this time?"

"Around." He shrugged. "Alright, I'll see you guys." He nodded to the other turtles.

"Please be careful." April said, to which he nodded as he headed out. Donnie tightened his lips, turning back around to type on his computer, doing so a but more feverishly than before.

"Donnie." Leo said as he hovered beside his brother, then. "Focus." Was all he said before he wandered towards the surveillance system to take a glance.

Meanwhile, Mikey hummed to himself as he wandered the sewers, adjusting a small device on his head and clicking a button on the side to activate the headlight. He looked around, not seeing anything out of the ordinary. He looked up when it began to rain outside, water beginning to cascade like waterfalls from the street drains. He approached one of the drains, looking up through it as he was barely able to see one of the street lights. He attempted to savor this moment, a glimpse into the outside world where he was rarely able to place himself in. Just then, something distracted him when it was washed in through the drain. Mikey took a step back, snatching up the object before it could flow away. He tilted his head as he looked at it, trying to make out the writing on the side. Just then, a shadow was cast upon him when someone crouched down from above, peeking into the street drain. Mikey blinked when he looked up to see a young child, who gasped upon seeing him.

"Woah- it's okay, I'm not going to hurt you." He then looked down for a moment. "Hey, is this yours?" He smiled, holding up the object so the light could hit it.

A paper boat, with S.S Georgie written on the side.

The child looked at Mikey. "That's my boat." The boy replied, smiling as the rain flowed down his yellow rain coat.

"Here, take it." Mikey held it up to the boy, who frowned a bit.

"I'm not supposed to take stuff from strangers." He replied.

"Oh... well, I guess that's a good thing to do... but if it's yours, you should have it." Mikey replied.

"... What's your name?" The boy asked.

"I'm Mikey! What's yours?"

"I'm Georgie. I guess we know each other now." He smiled.

"Yeah... say, maybe you can meet my brothers sometime. There's Leo, and Raph, and Donnie. We all live down here." Mikey said.

"Do you have fun down there, Mikey?"

"Oh yeah, totally! We have games, and our weapons, and comic books, oh, and pizza!"

A pause. "Do you have any balloons?" The boy asked.

"Balloons?" Mikey scratched his head. "Nah, no balloons down here."

"Well... we have balloons up here, Mikey." Georgie spoke quietly. "All colors... and they float." He slowly reached his hand into the drain towards the boat.

Just then, Mikey's communicator vibrated, his other hand reaching to grab it as he glanced to the side for a moment. "Hey Donnie!"

"Mikey, you've been standing in the same spot for five minutes according to the GPS, Leo wants you to move around a bit more."

Donnie said.

"Come up with me, Mikey. You'll float too." The boy said, his small hand inches from Mikey's.

"Uh... Mikey? Who is that?" Donnie asked when he heard the small voice.

"Oh! I made a new friend, his name is-" Mikey was cut off when suddenly, the boy viciously grabbed Mikey's arm, nails like claws sinking into it as he was dragged out of the drain. Donnie's heart skipped a beat when he heard his brother suddenly scream.

"Uh, Leo! LEO! We have a problem!" Donnie exclaimed. "Code blue!" He shouted as he hopped out of his chair, getting the attention of his brothers. "Someone's got Mikey!"

"Let's go, now!" Leo shouted, the turtles wasting no time with explanations as they dashed into the sewer tunnels. "Donnie, what's his location?" He asked as they ran down the tunnel.

"He was moving pretty quickly, but he's slowing down- his vitals are elevated, he's fighting back!" Donnie said as he glanced at his GPS tracker device.

"We're going to have to move quicker then. I'll break this guy in half if he leaves even one scratch on my brother." Raph growled, the three hopping out of the nearest manhole, ascending to the quiet street.

"Where, Donnie?" Leo asked tensely.

"This way, come on!" He shouted, the three sprinting in the direction his brother had been dragged off to. Suddenly, his distant screaming and struggling was heard when they came within earshot.

"We're coming Mikey, hang on!" Raph shouted before barreling forward, hopping over fences and shoving obstacles aside. He seethed when he finally found what he was looking for, coming upon Mikey trying to fight something off. He was on the ground, kicking at something that had a hold of his other foot.

"Hey!" Raph shouted as he whipped out his daggers. "You fight me

now."

"Oh... look at this, Mikey. More meat for my turtle soup!"

"Get out here before I drag you out!" Raph shouted as Donnie and Leo caught up to him. The distraction allowed Mikey to scramble back, moving far away enough from the shadows as he limped a bit.

"You can't do anything to me. You're scared."

"I'm not afraid of anything!" Raph shouted.

"Raph, stop talking to him, he's just trying to distract you." Leo shot him a look before looking forward. "You already got away with killing Amelia. You will not take our brother."

"Indeed... she was scrumptious. I wish I could have had the rest of her."

"Guys..." Mikey sniffled. "I'm bleeding really badly..."

"Alright, enough talking!" Raph said before crying out, charging forward. Suddenly, the glowing eyes in the darkness disappeared, Raph swinging at nothing.

"Donnie, get Mikey underground!" Leo shouted as he tried to chase the echoing sound of sinister laughter through the empty side streets. He narrowed his eyes, crying out in frustration when he realized that he had once again lost their attacker.

"Leo!" Raph shouted upon finding him. "Forget that loser. Mikey's hurt bad. We'll get him another day."

After sparing one last glance, Leo nodded, following him as they made their way back to their underground home. As they made their way through the tunnels, Leo sighed as he watched Donnie help his brother back home.

He had allowed this to happen. And now, the attacker was still free to do just that once again.

Did you survive? Yes? Good! So, though the turtles were narrowly able to save Mikey, who will their attacker pursue next? Is anyone safe? Find out more in the next update! In the meantime, thank you very much for reading, and see you next time!

6. A Fatal Attraction

Good afternoon, readers! As you can see, this chapter is a bit longer than the last few were. Things are going to get a bit intense, and also a bit steamy. Not sure what I mean? Read on and find out! As always, I do hope you enjoy this update!

Once they had returned, Mikey was immediately tended to. Leo and Raph looked on as Splinter and Donnie cleaned and dressed his wounds, Raph curling his lip as Mikey whimpered from the pain. Leo's jaw tensed up, green colored blood staining the towels which were tossed aside before his arms, legs, and foot were bandaged. Once this was done, he was left to rest, even his sleep anxious. He muttered as he slumbered, speaking fragmented phrases about a boy, claws, and a boat, among other things. It made no sense to anyone who happened to hear him when they wandered by his room to check on him.

"I can't believe that maniac was down here." Leo spat, his fists clenched. "He knows where we live. What's to stop him from coming into our actual living quarters?"

April shook her head. "We need to get to the bottom of this. Look, I need to go... I have an interview with the Smiths tomorrow." She paused, breaking eye contact with Leo. "Amelia's parents." She cleared her throat. "I'll keep you posted on what I'm able to get. If we can find this guy, we can also shut down Grayson's claims against you."

"I'm more worried about the next victim than what some small-minded jerk thinks about us." Raph said, Leo glancing at him in surprise.

"Him being elected and rounding the four of you up- or the five of you..." April nodded toward where Splinter was boiling some herbs. "... is not going to help anything or anyone." April replied. "Solving this will kill two birds with one stone."

"April, I know you're on a tight schedule..." Donnie began to tread

lightly. "... but are you sure you're okay staying by yourself after this? This creep might know where YOU live. I'm concerned about you being all alone out there... especially at night."

She sighed. "I mean, I guess I can always stay at Casey's if the offer still stands... maybe I should give him a call." She shrugged. She could take care of herself for the most part, but she knew Donnie had a point. They needed her right now, so she had to stay alive and in one piece.

"Oh... that's not exactly what I meant, but..." Donnie's voice faded as April took out her cellphone, sighing as he decided to just go back to looking through the scans on his computer. Just as April was about to call Casey, a thought came to his mind. "You know April, um... I can set up a surveillance system at your place if you want." He added unsurely. "There's a programmable feature where the visuals on my end are disabled unless there's an emergency alert. You know... for privacy purposes."

April thought about this for a moment before smiling at him gratefully. In the background, Raph nudged Mikey, trying to keep from laughing. "That would definitely give me piece of mind... thank you, Donnie. That's actually a good idea."

Donnie blushed in response, a huge grin on his face. "A- Anything for you, April! I- I mean, you're welcome."

"So does tomorrow sound okay? I can leave you my spare key." April asked.

"Sure, y- yeah, that's fine." Donnie replied in a higher pitch than normal.

Raph and Mikey continued to snicker, despite the seriousness of this situation. Leo shot them a look before glancing at Donnie, rolling his eyes a bit. Could he be any more obvious?

"Donnie. Anything on that DNA?" Leo asked, trying to bring his brother back to focus.

Donnie snapped out of his stupor, adjusting his glasses. "N- Nothing

yet... I'm sorry, Leo, but a few stray cells are going to take a longer time to produce something. If I had something better, like a solid skin sample, even a strand of hair or a fingernail, that would make a world of difference. It's going to be mostly sitting and twiddling my thumbs until..." Another thought came to mind then, clearing his throat as he saw April about to make a phone call. "U- Uh, April?"

"Yes?" She replied.

"I- Instead of waiting for Casey, maybe I can walk you back to your place?" Donnie asked as Leo pinched the bridge of his nose. "I- I can bring my equipment and install the system tonight instead of waiting for tomorrow, if you want. The sooner, the better, right?"

April blinked in response, thinking it over. "Are you sure? Don't your brothers need you here?"

"Oh, it's fine! Totally fine. I mean, Mikey's all fixed up and healing, sensei's keeping an eye on him, Leo's doing great at managing everything here, Raph's patrolling the nearby tunnels in the meantime, and the cellular data results for our mysterious assailant is still processing, so everything's covered." Donnie nodded as he tried to smile convincingly, clearing his throat when he noticed Leo staring at him flatly.

"Donnie." Leo motioned to his computer screen, showing the uploading DNA scans. "We can't play around with this."

Donnie exhaled sharply, pulling his brother aside. "Leo, I already told you earlier, it's not like I can really do anything about it right now. It's probably going to take anywhere from twenty-four to forty-eight hours to even register the genomic sequence because we have such a small sample." He spoke lowly. "So can you just let me do this? Please?" He strained his voice a bit.

"Alright, alright, I get it... just go." Leo sighed, Donnie hurrying back over to April, eventually following behind.

"Sorry about that April, Leo, um... was just asking me about some of the security functions on my computer during my absence... you know, just in case." Donnie said. She chuckled, raising her brows.

"Okay, then, let's go." She turned to Leo. "I'll keep in touch." She said as she tucked her phone back into her pocket, Donnie releasing the breath he had been holding.

"Alright. Be careful." Leo nodded.

"Let me know how Mikey is doing, okay?" She said to Raphael.

"You got it." He nodded. "Just uh... don't get too frisky, you two." Raph smirked, Donnie glaring daggers at him and mouthing something as April glanced to the side, wearing an awkward smile. The pair then headed into the tunnels. Donnie assisted April, lifting the manhole for her and taking her hand to help her out.

"You first, m' lady." Donnie said, April chuckling and shaking her head as he let her in front of him. "You know, I've actually gotten into reading some literature... well, before all this stuff started."

"Moving away from science, huh?" April asked.

"Oh, never." He smiled. "Just broadening my horizons is all. Well, as much as I can muster from being cooped up in a sewer. I may be a mutant turtle, but at least I can be a cultured one." Donnie said.

April's smile faded a bit, stopping to look at him. "Donnie..." She sighed. "... I don't care what Grayson or anyone says. You... shouldn't have to hide away from the world. We shouldn't have to walk these streets in fear. We should be... free to have peace of mind, to just... be people."

Donnie chuckled lightly, but there was a somber tone to it. "But April, I'm not a person."

At this, Donnie blinked in surprise when she placed her hands on his shoulders. "Look at me."

"I- I am. No problem there." He smiled crookedly.

"You are just as much a person as anyone out there. You're more of a person than that... monster that's hurting and killing people. You're more of a person than that bastard Grayson Roberts. He may not want to accept that, but I will make sure everyone else does. I trust

you and your brothers more than anybody." April said.

Donnie's smile softened at this. Losing himself for a moment, he drew April into a gentle hug. "I trust you more than anybody, too." He blinked his eyes open, then, taking a small step back as he rubbed his arm. "Don't- Don't tell my family I said that."

April couldn't help but laugh. "You can trust me on that one." She winked, and he scratched the back of his neck for a moment.

"Let's get you home. It's getting late." Donnie said, the pair continuing on towards her apartment.

Once they reached there, April went to her room to organize her things, Donnie placing down his bag to take out his equipment.

"Hey... I'll be a few minutes, I'm just going to hop in the shower." April said. Donnie froze for a moment, mentally reminding himself to breathe before nodding.

"Sure, uh... great." He said once again in a higher pitch than normal. April closed the bathroom door behind her, Donnie shaking his head to snap himself out of it before he went back to setting up his equipment. He didn't need a chair or step stool, being tall enough to begin installing the wireless device before mounting the adhesive plates for the cameras. He stuck his tongue out in concentration as he finished installing the first camera, about to move on to the second.

Meanwhile, April stepped out of the shower, opening the linen closet before swearing under her breath. She looked around for a moment before opening the door a crack, water dripping from her hair and skin. "Hey, Donnie?" April called from the bathroom.

Donnie was jostled from his concentration, fumbling a bit. "Y- Yes?"

"I, uh... forgot to take my towels out of the dryer... do you mind grabbing one for me? Just go past the kitchen and to the right." April asked, biting her lip in embarrassment.

Donnie froze, his stomach flipping. Was he dreaming? Had he completely misheard what she said? "O- Oh, yeah, sure..." He barely croaked out, deducing that neither of his pondered scenarios were the

case. He placed his tools aside, getting up to make his way over to her laundry area. His mind was spinning as he opened the dryer, the towels sitting inside. Being polite as he was, he decided to drape one for April's immediate need on his shoulder, folding the others neatly and placing them on the shelf to the side. As he did so, he noticed how soft they were. Living underground, small luxuries such as these were hard to come by. He glanced around instinctively before holding one of the towels to his face, feeling its soft texture. It smelled lovely. What was this scent- lavender, perhaps? He cleared his throat when he snapped back to reality, placing it with the others. He began to wander back towards the living room when he thought he heard a soft thud, stopping for a moment. "April? Are you okay?" He called out. When he got no response, he proceeded forth with an air of caution, not wanting to come upon her while indecent.

When he turned the corner however, he quickly realized that his efforts were for naught.

He stopped dead in his tracks, his jaw dropping as April stood before him, dripping wet and without a stitch of clothing. He nearly passed out from the shock, having to hold the wall a bit to keep steady. His mind screamed for his legs to turn him around, even muster so much as to simply look away. He was fully aware that remaining as he was, ogling at her like some scoundrel, was wrong on so many levels. He then tried to form a cohesive sentence, even a word, but nothing passed his lips save for awestruck stammering. In that moment, he was convinced that the sight before him had completely short-circuited his brain.

April only giggled lightly in response, water collecting around her feet. "Sorry... I thought I'd save you the trip." She said before approaching, not breaking her gaze. Donnie couldn't move a muscle if he tried, eventually feeling the towel slipping from his shoulder when she took it, gently patting her face dry. At this point, he was sure his heart had stopped as well. "Did I... scare you?"

"U- Uh... uh..." Donnie continued to stammer, having no idea what to say, much less do. He had been trying desperately to come up with a shred of a logical explanation as to how this was happening, but his mind had become like a dry well. All he could think about was how beautiful April was; moreso than he had imagined, as much as he

didn't want to admit even to himself. "A- April-" He could feel his throat tightening up. Beads of sweat accumulated on his forehead. "M- Maybe you sh- should-..." He shakily willed his arms to move, gently taking the towel back into his trembling hands as she finished drying her face. He gently wrapped the towel around her shoulders before releasing the breath he had been holding. He was about to take a step back when he felt April's hand slowly snake out from within the soft folds of the towel, resting on his forearm as she stared into his eyes.

"Donnie... I know you like me." April said softly, her hand reaching up to touch his face gently, sending shivers down his spinal column. "I see how you look at me... I see how you try not to be jealous when I'm with Casey." She smiled. "You're just such a gentleman about it. Even now... any other guy would have went to town. But you're not any other guy."

Donnie's voice cracked for a moment, trying to collect his thoughts. "I-... April, th- this is-... this is all rather sudden-"

"Shh..." She traced a finger over his lips. "It's okay. I like you too, Donnie. I could never bring myself to hurt you. I was so relieved when you offered to take me to my place. Just you and I... no one else around... it's perfect. I knew this was my chance to show you how I really feel." As April moved closer, Donnie backed up, feeling the wall pressing against his back before she hugged around his waist. He bit his lip as her towel fell to the ground.

"April, I-... I really, really like you..." He said breathlessly, unsure of what to do with his hands. He finally resolved to simply allow them to hang at his sides, his fists clenching and unclenching. He began to hear his own heart pounding in his head. "I- I just don't want to do anything improper. Y- You mean everything to me, April. I- I want to respect you, and h- honor you, and-..." His voice faded as she began to smirk playfully.

"Come on... aren't you going to give me even one kiss? If you're good, I might let you dry the rest of me off." She said barely above a whisper. Her face was not even an inch from his, his eyes crossing as she gravitated dangerously close. She finally closed the space, her lips brushing against his teasingly.

Donnie couldn't hold back any more. He delicately returned her kiss at first, not wanting to frighten her, despite feeling petrified himself. His heart pounded in his chest a mile a minute, but after some time, he surprisingly began to relax. He moved one arm to hold her close, threading his other hand through her wet hair. After what seemed like an eternity, she broke their kiss. He slowly opened his eyes, wearing a lovesick grin.

"April, this is a dream come true... I-" His eyes widened a bit when he looked down at her. April now had white greasepaint on her face, makeup the color of blood smeared around her mouth. She smeared it further when she licked her lips, her expression darkening.

"Want me to nibble on your face now, Donnie?" Her chuckle had a sinister air to it. "After all... now that you've had a taste, now it's my turn." April's voice became increasingly demonic, her mouth suddenly unhinging to reveal a huge set of razor sharp teeth.

"A- April?!" Donnie squeaked out as he tried to push the horrific sight away, surprised at her sudden strength as she shoved him hard against the wall. She opened her mouth wider, if that was even possible, and Donnie's face twisted as he felt sharp teeth pierce his shoulder. He could not comprehend just what was happening as he attempted to pry their clamp-like grip from him. Just then, a high pitched scream erupted from behind them, the monstrous April suddenly veering to the side where she sprawled upon the ground. Donnie shook his head in absolute confusion at what seemed to be a second April now standing before him. She wore nothing but undergarments, screaming shrilly as she beat the first with a metal baseball bat. He finally snapped out of his stupor when she called his name.

"Get behind me!" She grabbed his hand as the first April hopped to her feet, appearing like a monster out of a horror movie. As Donnie looked between the two, he almost felt ashamed- here he was, a mutant ninja with years of fighting skills, and he was the one being ushered behind the woman he swore to protect. His fingertips lightly graced over the skin connecting his neck to his shoulder, drawing back to see his own blood upon them. The two moved back as to their horror, the first April transformed before their eyes, a sadistic clown now standing before them. "What the hell are you?!" She

screamed, keeping a tight grip on her baseball bat.

"That was very, very rude, young lady." The clown said with a pout. "Just because you don't want to take advantage of the 'turtle soup' special doesn't mean I shouldn't have to miss out!"

"You're insane!" Donnie shouted. "This whole- situation is insane!"

"What's the matter, Donnie? Don Don Donnie Don!" The clown giggled. "You think your silly little gadgets and gizmos are going to help you? Well, at least I'll have more toys to play with when you join the rest of your filthy brood, hehe!"

April screamed, raising her bat as she was about to charge. Donnie grabbed her shoulder, not about to just stand back and let her run head first towards danger. "Get the hell out of my apartment!"

"Ooo... I see why you like her. A feisty one. She'll have a nice seasoning when I get to her."

"You aren't touching a hair on her head." Donnie said as he finally regained his senses, taking a step forward. The clown hissed, his eyes darkening as he smiled slowly. He then emitted an ear piercing shriek, charging for the tall-statured turtle. "April- April, come on!" Donnie exclaimed, trying to get them both out of harm's way. April stood her ground, however, rearing the bat back as it made contact with the clown's head. He hissed, baring sharp teeth as she hit him again, relentless. Forced to retreat, he scrambled to a nearby window, hopping out of it. April stuck her head out, her eyes darting to see if she could find where the intruder had gone.

He seemed to have vanished into thin air.

She clenched her teeth, slamming the window shut and locking it. She and Donnie took a moment to recover from what had just transpired, each of them taking in a deep breath before she looked over at him. Her skin trembled a bit, just now noticing the goosebumps on her arms and legs. Knowing for sure that this was no fake, Donnie grabbed the towel on the floor, glancing away as he extended his arm. He felt the towel slip from his hands as April took it, wordlessly drying the damp hair clinging to her skin before

wrapping it around herself. Silence remained between them for a short time before Donnie finally spoke.

"Are you alright, April?" He asked calmly.

"I think so... what about you?" She replied. "You're bleeding..."

"I'll be alright." He said. He knew they each had to make sense of what they had seen, what they had experienced... but for now, they both needed to recover from the ordeal. Donnie jumped when he felt something buzz suddenly, taking out his communicator as he groaned. "Hello?"

"Hey, are you done at April's yet? We need you to come home and help out with a few things here." Leo's voice was heard.

"Look..." Donnie ran a hand down the side of his face. "I'm not coming home tonight."

"Are you serious right now? Donnie, you need to knock it off with this whole teenage crush thing and-"

"We were both just attacked, Leo! INSIDE the apartment! We were here for no more than a half an hour and I nearly had my jugular torn off! So if you don't mind, I'd appreciate if you got off my case for a second!" Donnie snapped. Silence was heard on the other end for a moment, Leo taking time to process what he had just heard.

"Are you both okay?" Was his first response.

"We're fine." Donnie answered, a hint of annoyance in his voice. "I'm bleeding a bit, but not fatally."

"Was it him? Did you get a good look at the perp?" Leo asked.

"Leo... I don't know what it is." Donnie replied. "This is nothing I've ever encountered before."

"What are you talking about?" Leo asked.

"This guy- mutant- whatever it is... impersonated April, and then BIT me." He said, glancing to the side as April approached, dabbing his

shoulder to clean his wound a bit. He did a double take then, tilting his head as he knelt to the ground upon seeing something. He reached out, picking up the small object.

A tooth, sharp as a razor.

"He bit you?!" Leo exclaimed. "Donnie, what the hell is going on-"

"I have no idea, but... maybe now I can find out. I just found a tooth that it left behind. With some time, I can deduce what we're dealing with. A lot sooner than with a few stray blood cells."

"This is getting more complicated by the day... but if anyone can figure this out, it's you." Leo replied. "Look... I'm sorry for snapping at you earlier. Just let me know if anything else happens."

Donnie smiled then. "Thanks, Leo." They said their goodbyes, Donnie pocketing the communicator before going over to where April was grabbing some bandages. "Are you sure you're okay, April?"

She nodded, walking back over to patch up his shoulder. "Yeah... I guess I didn't think he would come here... I knew there was a chance of it happening but..." She looked up at him. "I'm glad you were here with me tonight."

When he realized how close she was, Donnie felt his face turn hot once again, rubbing his neck as he glanced away shyly. "Well... you were the one that went into attack mode... I just stood there like a brainless idiot."

April sighed. "Donnie... what is this guy? How was he able to do that? It's almost like he's some kind of... shape shifter."

"Well, it's very possible that he's a mutant. With that said, we may be able to see a benefit of the Mutant Registration act. Mutant ID information is all in the government databases... the very database that I happen to be able to access." He smirked. "We have enough DNA now to pull up everything we need to know about him. With that information, we can track him down."

"Sounds like a plan... right now though, I need to dry my hair and get into my pajamas before I freeze." April replied.

Donnie's face fell, realizing that underneath her towel, April was still in nothing but her undergarments. "Y- Yes, of course, um... I'll go back to the cameras then-" He nearly tripped over himself as he moved past her, April unable to help but giggle.

"Oh... and Donnie?" April glanced over her shoulder at him.

"Yes?" Donnie replied as he reorganized his supplies, his back to her.

"Can we please talk about what I walked in on earlier? Maybe tomorrow morning?" She rose a brow and smirked as he froze, not daring to look behind him. "I'll take that as a yes. Goodnight, Donnie."

He rubbed his face in embarrassment, muttering a goodnight to her before holding his head in his hands. This had to most frightening, yet humiliating evening of his life. He exhaled slowly, forcing himself to resume concentrating on installing the surveillance system. He worked all night, finally crashing and sleeping soundly on April's couch. It wasn't quite big enough for him, the lower half of his legs hanging over the side of one armrest and hovering above the floor. Deep down, however, he thought even this was luxury compared to the sewer.

Well, I'm sure you're reeling as much as our shaken up pair is here! With their mysterious attacker coming at them from all angles, is there any way to stop this? Will they be able to solve his identity, or lack thereof? Find out more in the next update! As always, thank you for your kind words and support, and see you next time!

7. Meet The Smiths

Good afternoon, readers! Thank you so much for your encouragement so far, and I'm glad you are enjoying this! Mine and Dixie's work schedules were a little hectic this week, but we are back to working diligently and are making some great progress! So, please bear with us as we continue this spooky story through this Halloween season! Are you ready for more? Sit back, and don't bite your nails too much as you read this next update!

The following morning, April awoke, shuffling out of her bedroom as she ran a hand through her messy hair. When she entered her living room, she couldn't help but snicker when she came upon Donnie, still asleep. She shook her head playfully, going into the kitchen to fill a pot of water for tea. As it brewed, she looked around at all the work he had done through the night. It was quite impressive for only having done it in a short time. It was then that the terrifying events of the prior night came crashing back, her smile fading as she glanced over her shoulder into the living room. As she had been waiting for Donnie with her towel, she remembered hearing voices, wondering what was going on and what had been taking him so long. She had thrown on her bra and panties with annoyance, which clung along with her hair to her wet skin. When she came upon where Donnie was, however, she thought she had been dreaming when she saw him with... herself.

And not only that, but they were in... a compromised position, to say the least.

She sighed, knowing that despite the danger they had both been in the night before, that they now faced another hurdle; explaining just... what the hell that was all about.

She shook her head when the whistle of her kettle distracted her from her thoughts, hurrying over to take it off the stove. She exhaled slowly, pouring herself a cup before setting the kettle on the counter.

Several minutes later, she reentered the living room, shuffling over to

her reptilian friend still splayed on the couch. "Donnie." She said softly, shaking him lightly. "Donnie, wake up." She rolled her eyes when there was still no response. "Donnie." She said a bit more firmly. She drew back when he jostled a bit, rubbing his eyes and sitting up.

"Oh, April, er-" He swore under his breath as his glasses fell off his face, fumbling with them for a moment. "Good morning." He smiled nervously. "Sorry, I'm not the most graceful in the early hours."

"It's okay. I just made some tea, do you want a cup?" April asked.

"Uh... sure, thank you." He sat up a bit more as April went back into the kitchen. He took off his glasses, rubbing his eyes once again before glancing around for a moment. "Do you, um... need help with anything?"

"No, I'm fine." April replied, taking out a couple bowls, pouring some cereal. She brought over a bowl to him, to which he nodded in thanks as he ate. April watched him for a moment, silence between them. He noticed this out of the corners of his eyes, having a feeling that he could guess what she was thinking about. "Donnie... I wanted to ask you about what happened when-"

"April, it's not what you think." He cut her off suddenly, making her blink. "I'm-... I don't want you to think I'm some kind of-... oh my goodness, I cannot believe that I-..." He shifted on the couch uncomfortably. "April, I didn't want my feelings to be presented that way." He sighed as April frowned. "Now that the cat is pretty much out of the bag, I-... I've felt something... more... for you. I tried to be as subtle as possible, I-... didn't want to ruin what we had already. Still, I- I've read multiple studies on the best way to attract a desired mate- um... y- you know, sense of humor, building trust, of course being respectful and dignified, not to mention displaying knowledge and skills-"

"Donnie." April cut him off this time, turning his head gently to prevent him from avoiding her gaze any longer. "I'm sorry." She looked down for a moment. "I'm sorry that... you had to go through that. You know that I care about you." She shook her head for a moment. "I don't want to hurt you."

"I know." Donnie nodded.

April thought for a moment. "... How long?" She was curious to know.

"To be honest... I've felt something since our first encounter, April. It was small, like a seed. But over time, it has grown. Blossomed. I just... I've never worked up the nerve to-... say anything."

April's heart sank. Why did he have to do this now? She wasn't angry or annoyed with him, but she felt horrible that he had been apparently feeling like this for quite some time- and that it was a ravenous monster of all things that had literally forced him into a corner, forced him to confess to her now. She could tell he had not been ready, it wasn't the right time in his mind either, to be telling her all this. She could practically feel the fear of rejection emanating from him, of being judged or ridiculed. "Donnie... I'm glad you told me this." She chose her words carefully. "I'm just... I don't really know how I feel right now. This is the last thing on my mind with everything that's happening, so I can't really... address it."

He appeared disappointed, but he nodded. "I... I understand. You're right, April, with all this madness, you can't be expected to make a sound decision on something like this without a sounder mind." He cleared his throat. "I was just afraid that-... I was concerned that you wouldn't even consider the thought because of our... differences."

April rose a brow. "Differences?"

"W- Well yes, I mean-... you're a human, and I'm..." His voice trailed, no need to say anything further.

April frowned deeply at this, extending her hand to rub his shoulder lightly. "Listen to me. I do not care that you're a mutant, Donnie. I don't see just some mutant when I look at you. I see my friend." At this, Donnie finally made eye contact, smiling lightly. "I really haven't had the time to think about dating anyone, actually." She added. "I've been trying to focus on my career, let alone dealing with all this... whatever that thing is terrorizing us."

"Honestly, April... I probably would have just kept this a secret forever if last night hadn't happened..." He said. "It's just

humiliating... you having to see me like that. I don't want you to think I'm some... some scoundrel, or something." He shuddered, and April couldn't help but giggle.

"Donnie, I could never think that about you. You're really a sweet guy." April replied.

At this, Donnie blinked, chuckling nervously as he rubbed his arm. "Sweeter than Casey, even?" He glanced away when April gave him a flat look at his comment. "Sorry, that was a bad joke..."

April snickered then. "He does have his sweet moments... as far and few between as they are." She said, lightly nudging him. "But all of you guys have your knucklehead moments too." She winked.

Right on cue, before any more could be said between them, there was a knock at the door. Donnie hopped up, but April reassured him before heading to the door, opening it a crack. "Hey, it's just me." Casey said, April opening the door up more. "I guess you're okay..." He said as she motioned for him to come inside.

"What do you mean?" April asked, and in response, Casey rose a brow as he took something out of his pocket. "Oh... I forgot you also have a communicator."

"I look at it every once in a while... but the thing was buzzing like crazy this morning. I looked at it and saw something about you. Just wanted to see if you were okay." Casey said.

"Thanks..." She smiled. "Yeah, everything's fine now. I'll explain later, but I have to get ready for an interview."

"So, I was thinking... you should probably stay with someone if you're being targeted or something." Casey said.

"Already covered." Donnie said as he came into the room, Casey raising a brow in surprise.

"Uh... hey." He said flatly, glancing between him and April, as if silently expecting an explanation. She said nothing, quietly excusing herself as she wandered to her bedroom.

"Hello, Casey." Donnie replied. "April is going to be just fine. I installed state of the art surveillance and alarm systems last night."

Casey scoffed. "I can see that really helped, she was attacked last night." He said flatly. "An alarm can't fight her enemies for her."

"Actually, Casey, that was BEFORE I completed the installation. And to further correct you, I was the one attacked last night."

"This guy came to April's apartment, Donnie." Casey pointed out. "He was coming for April."

"I suppose it was a good thing I was here then, wasn't it?" Donnie crossed his arms.

"Can't disagree on that one." Casey shrugged, but Donnie could read irritation in his expression. April reentered the room then, dressed and ready to head out.

"I have to go- can you guys lock the door on the way out?" April asked.

"Got it." Donnie and Casey said in unison, the pair glancing at each other with irritation.

"Alright, I'll let you know how the interview was, okay? Love you!" She said on the way out of her door. She then stopped when she realized the last words to come out of her mouth, clearing her throat as she shook her head and continued on. No sense trying to unring a bell now.

However, Casey and Donnie both blinked, speechless for a moment. "U- Uh, love you too, April!" Donnie exclaimed, his voice cracking.

"I think she said that to me." Casey interjected.

"... Are you sure? I think she looked at me when she said that."

"You should get those glasses checked. She was definitely looking at me."

"Maybe you should GET glasses, Casey, because actually, her back

was to us both." Donnie smirked.

"Get a life, man." Casey headed out the door, shaking his head. Donnie couldn't help but smile to himself, ignoring Casey's words as he locked April's door as requested. He realized then that he needed to get back underground; he had a job to do. Making sure there was no one watching, he quickly headed for the nearest manhole, popping the seal off and making his way inside before covering it back up. He navigated through the tunnels, eventually returning to his familiar home, immediately announcing his arrival. Raphael was the first to approach him.

"How's Mikey doing?" Donnie asked as he went over to his computer area, organizing his things.

"He's up. His wounds are looking better." Raph said. "He's been having nightmares, but sensei thinks those will go away with some time. He's sitting on the couch with Leo right now." He then took a step closer, lowering his voice. "What happened last night, Donnie?"

"I'll explain everything. Don't worry, we're fine." Donnie said.

"It's not fine." Raph said firmly as he took hold of his shoulder. "Two of my brothers were attacked by this guy, and April. I want to see to it personally that he's broken in half." He said, tensing his jaw.

"You may get your wish soon, Raph." Donnie said, pulling something out of his belt pocket. "This is the tooth that broke when April fought it. I'm going to run some tests now and see what I can pull up."

Leo entered the area then, hearing the last bit. "Donnie." He went past Raphael.

Donnie sighed. "Leo, look... I'm sorry. I know I need to be here, especially with what happened to Mikey, but-"

"I'm glad... that you were with April last night. If you hadn't, things would have turned out much differently." Leo said, Donnie's expression softening a bit. "I know you're doing everything you can, and I'm sorry if I haven't been the most appreciative of it."

Donnie nodded. "Thanks, Leo. I'll let you know if I'm able to get

anything from the DNA scans."

"You got it." Leo nodded, Raph watching him as he headed past the lounge, where Splinter was sitting with Mikey.

"Michelangelo." Splinter placed a gentle hand on his son's shoulder. "You must realize that not all enemies are physical, or can be fought with weapons and blades. Enemies can fight from within, too. Fear, doubt, despair... those are all some of the enemies which can plague your mind and your heart. Defeating these foes take much strength, but neglecting to do so will cripple you.

"But Sensei, can fear break your arm, or something? Can it really make you crippled?" Mikey blinked.

"No. Remember, it is not physical. It can make you withdrawn, lose focus. But more importantly, it can cause one to lose their hope, their faith, their will to keep fighting." Splinter said, Mikey nodding.

"I think I understand." As Splinter left his side to tend to some things, he thought back to what had happened to him, how he had experienced terrible nightmares. He decided that he wanted things to be normal again, taking the television remote to turn it on.

Meanwhile, April arrived at the Smith's residence, knocking on the door. A few moments later, the door opened, a middle aged couple ushering her in. She noticed that once she was inside, they shut the door and locked it, asking her to sit down. The house was neat, pictures of Amelia throughout the rooms. April set up the recorder, placing it to the side as the couple sat on the couch across from her.

"I... wanted to personally give you my condolences..." April started, the couple nodding in thanks as they held their hands in support. "... and I wanted to thank you for letting me speak with you today."

"April... you seem like a very level-headed person. Open-minded. We only wanted to speak to you about anything concerning Amelia." Mrs. Smith said.

"Oh..." April blinked. "I appreciate that, Mrs. Smith. So... can you tell me a little bit about Amelia?"

"She was the light of our lives. She was an angel. She... loved to help people, she loved being kind to others." Mr. Smith said.

"She was an excellent student... she had a lot of friends in the neighborhood. See... my husband and I moved here just before Amelia was born. We wanted a new start." Mrs. Smith said. "My cousin had moved to the city years ago, and he loved it here."

"Does he still live here, Mrs. Smith?" April asked.

"No." She cleared her throat. "He was killed by-" She hesitated. "... in an accident."

"I see... I'm so sorry to hear that." April frowned. How much tragedy had this family endured? "So... you've had no problems, no altercations since you've moved to New York?" April asked.

"Nothing major." Mr. Smith said. Mrs. Smith kept glancing at her husband, shifting a bit uncomfortably in her seat.

"So you have no reason to believe that anyone was specifically targeting Amelia?" April asked.

"No. Amelia was loved by many in this neighborhood." Mr. Smith said.

"Can you describe the day she went missing?" April asked.

Mr. Smith went to speak, but Mrs. Smith cut him off. "She had been complaining about nightmares... one of the other children had showed her some scary stories online, these scary characters... she said she began to see them in her window. She was having trouble sleeping for about two weeks before she was abducted."

"Honey... Ms. O'Neil asked about-"

"She has to hear this." Mrs. Smith looked at him, furrowing her brows deeply as he sighed. "The night she was taken... I had been working late. She had gone to my husband in a fright, telling him that someone was looking at her from the street. She couldn't make them out, it was standing away from the streetlight."

"Honey, a man took her. 'He' was standing there, not-"

"Turn off the recorder." Mrs. Smith said suddenly, appearing very tense before she repeated the command more firmly. April did so, leaning forward a bit. "Mrs. Smith, if this is too much, we can take a break, or reschedule-"

"Listen to me." She said, her husband running a hand down his face. She took something out of her pocket, handing it to April. "Don't read it here. Go to a safe place. Everything you need to know is in the letter. Do not show this to anyone else- the press, the police, detectives. No one." She exhaled slowly. "That fool of a man running for governor thinks those mutants did it. I know for a fact they didn't harm one hair on my baby's head. But Ms. O'Neil, there is... something... out there. It steals the lights away. That's why it went after my child." Before April could say anything, Mrs. Smith took her hand. "Be careful, April. Be careful how deeply you involve yourself with this." She then looked around. "I'm sorry... I can't tell you anything else. It could be listening. I already know we are both in grave danger."

April frowned. "Mrs. Smith, if someone is threatening you... I have contacts in police headquarters, I can-"

"The police can't fight this." Mrs. Smith's eyes were big as she shook her head. "They can't do anything about this." She then got up, nervously turning to head into her bedroom and shutting the door, leaving April dumbfounded.

At the door, Mr. Smith sighed lightly. "You must forgive my wife. She... her cousin had put all sorts of crazy ideas in her head when she was growing up. She suffers from a few things, and... this has made things so much worse."

"Mr. Smith, please... if you need anything, don't hesitate to reach out to me. I... can't imagine what you're going through." April said.

"Thank you, Ms. O'Neil. I just want justice for my daughter. I don't want anyone else to suffer like we have."

April nodded, bidding him goodbye before taking her leave. She

placed the letter from Mrs. Smith in her purse with her recorder, her mind reeling. There was something... strange about how Mrs. Smith had behaved. Something... unsettling. She had to get to the turtles as soon as she was finished with work, anxious to read the letter.

Have the chills in your spines settled yet? Alright then! With this said, what do you think of the interview? Is there something truly sinister going on with the Smiths, or is Mrs. Smith really off her rocker? Or perhaps, is it a bit of both? Please leave your thoughts in a review! Thank you again for reading, and see you next time!

8. A Lesson On It

Good evening, readers! I hope this update finds you all in good spirits! The last time we left off on a bit of an ominous note, and that feeling will continue through this chapter. Are you ready for more? Please enjoy!

As Donnie continued to analyze the tooth, Leo was in his room, looking over missing child posters and marking off spots on a map, Splinter looking everything over with him. Raphael stood guard in the tunnels, looking around for anything suspicious. Mikey was seated on the couch, the glow of the television illuminating his face. He laughed as he watched his favorite show, one of the few things that could cheer him up when he was down.

It was then that Mikey sensed something wasn't right. His smile slowly faded as the screen flickered, as if the program had been tampered with.

That's when he saw it.

He was frozen as his eyes widened, the remote shaking in his hand. That clown that had pursued him not once, but twice, was now staring at him from within the screen.

"Don't be afraid... don't be afraid..." Mikey said under his breath, though his heart was hammering at a maddening pace. He glanced to the side, wondering if he should be calling for his brothers or his father. He was afraid if he said anything, even moved an inch, something would happen.

"You like watching space shows, don't you, Mikey?" The clown cackled. "Everything floats in space, you know... and soon, you'll float too!" Suddenly, the clown's arm shot out from the television. The screen did not break as the hand phased through, Mikey screaming as he scrambled back.

"You guys, I seriously think I ate some bad pizza!" Mikey shouted as the clown hissed, continuing to emerge from the television.

"Mikey, I know you're not feeling well, but it's going to take time to heal. Just keep watching your show, I really need to concentrate here!" Donnie shouted from his lab.

"I really don't want to do that right now!" Mikey exclaimed. "Leo, Raph, somebody!"

Raphael could hear Mikey's cries echoing from within the tunnels, striding briskly back into their lair. "Mikey, what's-" His eyes widened when he entered the lounge, sprinting over as he unsheathed his daggers. "What the hell is that?!"

"It's that clown, he's coming after me!" Mikey shouted as Raphael narrowed his eyes. He growled as the clown's face began to phase through the screen, baring its teeth. As it began to wriggle erratically, continuing to morph through the screen, Raph thrust his foot forward. He made contact with the clown's face, knocking the television back as it disappeared inside it. Silence came after the television smashed to pieces on the ground, Raph staring at it for a moment.

"Get up. Get up, Mikey!" Raph hissed, moving his behind him. He then strode over, sifting through the pieces with his foot to make sure no danger remained. "Is that the thing that hurt you?"

"Yeah, he has all these sharp teeth and everything!" Mikey exclaimed.

"What is going on in here, what is all the commotion?" Splinter asked as he and Leo came into the lounge.

"It was here! That clown guy was in the TV and it tried to kill me!" Mikey exclaimed, to which Leo stopped, giving him a look.

"Leo." Raph approached him. "He's not making it up. I just busted that thing in. Something... was coming through the screen. I can't explain it any other way."

"Raph, if someone was intruding, Donnie's sensors would have picked it up." Leo said.

"Well, they didn't. Now what?" Raph asked.

Leo felt like punching a wall. "Alright. We need to put our heads together. Take what we know and go with it. This guy can shape shift."

"Walk through walls like a ghost..." Mikey whined.

"And has an appetite for kids... and mutant turtles." Raph finished, curling his lip. "This guy has it out for us."

"What do you mean?" Mikey asked.

"This stuff has been happening to us for weeks. I see that now. Look: what happened the day of the fair, with Mikey, now April and Donnie... we're being targeted." Raph said.

"But we don't even know him, let alone the reason why he's attacking us."

"I don't care about knowing him. I only care about making sure I pummel the shit out of him."

"Raphael, you must learn your enemy. Learning about your enemy will make your force against him stronger. Diving into a fog without seeing what lurks within it spells destruction." Splinter spoke up, the taller turtle hissing under his breath. "We must also look after April and Casey. They have close ties with us, their lives are also in danger."

"With all due respect, sensei..." Raph looked over at him. "... how in the hell do we learn about something when we don't even know what it is?"

Meanwhile, Casey whistled to himself as he finished his shift at the pizzeria, moving past the counter to put some things away and gather his belongings after closing up shop. He had made sure everything was locked and secured, nodding to himself before heading into the back room. He checked his phone briefly, snickering to himself before pocketing it. He slung his backpack over his shoulder, making his way back to the front. He noticed something out of the corner of his eyes then, stopping dead in his tracks. He slowly turned towards the front door, mouthing something under his breath. In the short time

he had been in the back room, a large symbol had been spray painted along the front door and window- from the inside. Casey slowly took out his mask, putting it on as he grabbed his hockey stick. His heart was racing now, his breathing uneven.

"Where the hell are you...?!" He growled, looking around the store. "Show yourself, damn it!" He grew tenser by the moment, his eyes unable to avert from the violet colored spray paint. Just then, he heard the counter bell ring, whirling around. He slowly made his way over as a gloved hand pressed it repeatedly in rhythmic succession, Casey clenching his teeth. He waited to see if the crouched individual would show themselves, even speak, but they simply continued to ring the bell. When he came closer, it finally stopped, the hand retracting as Casey was poised to swing. He furrowed his brows when slowly, a balloon rose from the same spot that the hand had been, Casey following it with his eyes. He squinted, barely able to see his reflection upon the shiny material. When he saw something beside his reflection suddenly, he whirled around, swinging as something red darted out of the way. He hissed, glancing over his shoulder to see someone now standing before him, holding the balloon. It floated upwards slowly, revealing the clown's face as he smiled sinisterly.

"Hiya, Arnold."

Casey was seething, pointing at the front of the store. "Did you do this?!"

"Aww, you don't like it? I know it means a lot to you." The clown chuckled.

"You better start telling me who the hell you are and what the fuck you think you're doing here. I swear, I will knock every damn tooth out of your head." Casey spat.

"How much do you want to bet on that, Arnold?"

"Stop calling me that, asshole!" Casey hopped over the counter, but the clown was quick, evading him. Casey looked all around, flipping his mask up to see better. "Where the hell did you go?! Get back here and fight me, freak!"

"Oh, dear... I guess we started off on the wrong foot, didn't we?" His voice was heard before Casey felt a hard shove against his side, falling to the ground with a thud. The clown stood over him, staring down for a moment before pressing a foot against Casey's chest, preventing him from getting back to his feet. He growled as he tried to no avail to shove the foot off. "Let me let you in on a secret. I wouldn't bet too much on that whole... tooth thing, that you said earlier." The clown leaned in closer, his face barely an inch from Casey's. He winced, thinking he may have felt cartilage in his chest pop once or twice as the foot pressed harder against him. He wondered how in the hell this guy was able to exert so much pressure, as if his foot was made out of lead. "You hate this, don't you? Feeling like you're drowning. Sinking. I can fix that, Casey."

"Fuck you." Casey spat as he wheezed, his arms trembling as his muscles exerted all their energy. Alas, the clown's foot did not budge. He knew if he did not get out of this soon, that his ribs would most likely break at this rate.

"You've got a bad mouth, don't you? Perhaps I can show you my little secret now... I'll show you a bad mouth!" The clown smirked, growling as he began to unhinge his jaw. Casey's brows twisted as the clown's mouth grew and grew, revealing row after row of razor sharp teeth. Just as the clown was about to attack, the sound of the store door opening distracted them both, Casey whipping his head towards its direction.

"Casey? Are you here?" April's voice was heard.

Casey gasped for air, realizing that the clown had vanished without a trace, not understanding how this was possible when he had been practically crushing him. He scrambled to his feet, wiping his forehead. He hurried over to April, hesitating a moment when he noticed that the Purple Dragon symbol that had been spray painted was also gone.

"We have to go." He said, grabbing his back pack and began to drag April out of the store.

"Casey, why- what the hell is going on-"

"Not now. Not here." Was all he said as he walked out, locking the door behind him before striding down the street.

"Casey- Casey Jones, you stop right now and tell me why you're dragging me around like this!" April tore her arm away, Casey whirling around.

"I don't know what kind of shit is going on, but we are figuring it out. I was out of the room for no more than a second, the store was locked up, and a giant sign was spray painted on the front of the store. The sign of the Purple Dragon gang, April. Oh, and what else, what else... oh yeah! That clown freak nearly crushed my rib cage!"

April's face dropped. "What...?" She said barely above a whisper. "But... I didn't see anything-"

"I know you didn't. It was all gone when you came in, but it's real. It's real, April." He stressed, shaking his head. "No more games. This is serious now."

"This is serious 'now?'" She scoffed. "So it wasn't serious before? When it came into my apartment?" April exclaimed. "That wasn't 'serious' enough for you? Did you think that was all some game?"

Casey threw his hands up. "April, you know that's not what I-"

"As usual, nothing is real enough for you until you're the one it's happening to." She said accusingly, turning to walk away.

Casey swore under his breath. "April, wait." He said, moving to grab her arm. She pulled it back, glaring at him. "Look, I'm sorry. I didn't mean for it to come off that way. Of course it was serious. I just... say stupid shit sometimes."

April exhaled slowly. "Okay." She sighed. It was always refreshing when he was at least a little mature. If only it would stick for longer than a few minutes. "We need to get underground. Looks like we both have something to tell Leo and the others. Come on." She said, Casey nodding as he followed her.

Meanwhile, Donnie widened his eyes for a moment, hopping out of his seat. "Guys- Guys, I've got something!" He exclaimed. Moments

later, Leo and Raph, followed by Mikey, entered the lab area.

"Talk to me, Donnie." Leo said as his eyes looked at the screens.

"I knew this tooth was a good find, we would have never gotten these results this fast with just the-

"Donnie. Focus." Leo reminded his brother.

"Right, sorry. So I ran several tests to try to determine the identity of our attacker by seeing if the DNA extracted matched to any on the human and mutant databases." He spoke as his fingers typed away on his keyboard. "Let's see what it has to show us." He pulled up some images on his screen, raising a brow. "Well, what a surprise, the DNA isn't a human match... now with mutants, it's a little more complex of a genomic structure, but it will at least tell us some of the traits associated with-..." He stopped when he pulled up a rotating image of DNA, his expression becoming blank.

"Donnie?" Leo shook his shoulder lightly. "What is it?"

"We don't need you losing your marbles now, it's the only good thing you've got going." Raph said.

Leo shot Raph a look before Donnie shook his head. "That's impossible."

"What is? That's a neat picture though. Look at it go round, and round, and-" Mikey stopped when Leo shot him a look that time.

"This is... see... mutant DNA is much like a human's, but the structure of the DNA contains enhanced genomes, more complex patterning. Looking at the DNA structure of this tooth, however..." Donnie shook his head. "The structure itself is completely different. Look at these bonds. See, this is the frame of the DNA's structure, which is almost... like bare bones... and these genomes... it's as if it's interchangeable."

"What does that mean in English, Donnie?" Raph asked.

"It means that this... whatever this is, can literally change its DNA makeup. This is implying that it can take DNA from someone or

something, and absorb it. Its physical form can become that thing, even change it if it could. This is beyond just shape shifting." Donnie typed away at his keyboard, clearing his throat. "Let's see if we can find out how old he is, at least. With my carbon reader, maybe we can figure out if it's fully developed." As he pulled up another report, Leo glanced back at Raph.

"Do you think this has to do with the Kraang?" Leo asked.

"Doesn't sound like the Kraang. Even they wouldn't pull this off. They're more about technology and laser guns." Raph replied.

"If you're wondering if this is possibly something not from Earth, at this point, that is entirely plausible." He then stopped, blinking at the screen.

"Hey, Donnie? Uh... I think you need to adjust your screen. That number eight is sideways..." Mikey tilted his head. "Huh. He looks kind of old for an eight year old..."

"That's not a sideways eight, Mikey... that's the symbol for infinity." Donnie furrowed his brow. "What is this thing...?" He breathed. "Can we at least see where it originated...?" He muttered, typing away at his keyboard. "Unknown location..." He leaned back in his chair, running a hand along his scalp. "So... according to these results, we have virtually no idea what we're dealing with."

"So it's another space alien, right? Can't we just... kick his butt like we did the Kraang?" Mikey asked.

"Even the Kraang's DNA could offer more information about its genetic makeup, origin, lifespan, something! This..." Donnie's voice faded. "This is nothing like I've ever seen. It's as if we're dealing with some higher, metaphysical life form."

Just then, Leo glanced over his shoulder as April and Casey approached. "Hey... what's going on?" She asked.

"Donnie's pulling up some information from that tooth he got from your apartment." Leo replied.

"Or lack, thereof." Donnie added, seeming exasperated.

"I had the interview today... I'll play the recording, but it wasn't very long. Something is very... off about all this." April said.

"Gee, you think?" Raph scoffed. "I've had enough of this guy playing hide and seek. I don't care what kind of meta-whatever life form he is, I'm going to kick his ass straight to the moon."

April cleared her throat. "Anyway... Mrs. Smith stopped the whole thing at one point and gave me this to read. She told me to read it somewhere safe." She took out the letter from her pocket.

"This sounds a little dangerous, April. Are you sure that envelope doesn't have anything else in it?" Donnie asked, glancing over his shoulder. He was about to get up when Casey took it, April tensing up a bit when he opened the envelope and pulled out the letter from inside.

"Looks like it's just a piece of paper with writing on it. Although, who knows. Could turn into a balloon or something." He said sarcastically, giving it back to April before pacing around a bit. "This guy is either a part of or knows the Purple Dragon." He said before explaining what happened to him back at the pizzeria.

"One, there's no way that the Purple Dragon could pull off tricks and attacks as elaborate as this. Two, according what I'm seeing here, this thing is not only not human, it's not a mutant, either." Donnie replied.

"So what are we dealing with here, then?" Casey asked.

"I haven't the slightest idea." Donnie said with an air of defeat. "My reporting isn't giving me much to work with, here."

"Well, aren't you supposed to be the smart one?" Casey asked with a bit of arrogance. "Get back on your computer and figure it out."

"Casey, I'm sure he's trying to do that." April said, shooting him a look.

"Look. I know about what happened in her apartment last night. I may not be a boy genius, but I'm not stupid. I can be a pervert sometimes, but at least I make no bones about it." Casey continued.

"Just... what exactly are you implying, here?" Donnie shot him a side glance.

"No, no... don't worry about me. Just keep dragging this out. You need to be close to April, after all, as long as this guy sticks around. She 'needs' you to protect her. I- In fact, you should just move your little geek-verse here to her apartment being you're going to be 'protecting' her overnight." Casey answered.

Donnie scoffed, shaking his head. "You are really an idiot, Casey."

"Guys, enough!" April shouted. "Casey, go sit on the couch, and Donnie, go back to doing... whatever report you're working on." She huffed. "We are being attacked, people are being killed, and all you can think of is this petty garbage!" She shook her head, storming out of the room. Leo gave them a look, Raph shoving both of them aside before following where April went. He saw that she was sitting with Mikey, who looked over at the letter she was reading as he ate some pizza. April's eyes widened as she read it, looking up upon finishing. "Leo? Raph?" She held up the letter. "I think you need to see this."

They gathered around the table, April placing the letter on it. "Mrs. Smith describes an older cousin she had... he grew up in Maine and moved to the city, starting his own limousine business here. He then went back to Maine for a brief time to... settle a score with an old enemy. Something which had terrorized him growing up."

"Something...? Not someone?" Leo asked, April glancing at him uneasily.

"He died during that encounter, and then a terrible storm raged through the town, wiping most of it out. She warned that she believes that the creature that killed her cousin is the same creature that took Amelia."

"Maine... is that where this thing is from?" Leo questioned.

"I need to do some research, but... the letter says more. I'm going to try to look a few things up." April said, heading out of the area.

"Hang on." Casey said. "Is this the address of the limousine company?"

He pointed to a spot on the letter.

"I guess... why?" April asked.

Casey was silent for a moment. "That's right down the street from where my dad's auto shop was." He slowly looked up at her.

"What's the name of it? The limo place?"

"It wasn't-... it was something else when I was growing up..." He got on his phone, looking up the address. "Here. This is the place before it closed." He showed April, who took her own phone out and made a note to herself. As she did so, something came to his mind, focusing on the thought for a short time. "I'll be back."

"Wait a second, Casey... don't go running off alone." April said. Donnie glanced up, shaking his head before he kept working.

"I'll keep an eye on him." Raph offered. "Plus, if the freak wants to hang around us, it'll give me a chance to beat the stuffing out of him." He added.

Leo rolled his eyes. "Just be careful, please."

When Raph headed into the tunnels, Casey was so far ahead, he had to run to catch up. "Hey, no beating up clowns without me."

"Hopefully we don't run into him." Casey said. "But the way things are going, he'll probably be waiting for us... it's like he's one step ahead no matter what."

"We'll get him, don't worry. So... where we going again?"

Casey shook his head. "I'll explain when we get there."

We'll cut things here for now! So, have our heroes finally found a means to learn more about their attacker? Will this give them the upper hand, or will Casey's statement about "it" always being one step ahead ring true? Find out more next time, and please leave a review with your thoughts! In the meantime, thank you again for reading, and see you next time!

9. An Old Fashioned Showdown?

Good afternoon, readers! I hope you all are having a spectacular start to your weekend- and that this update only makes it better! We're really going to be seeing some crossover now between the two universes here, and I'm trying really hard to keep everything flowing smoothly as far as continuity goes. So, are you ready for more action and thrills? As always, please enjoy!

Back inside the lair, April borrowed Donnie's laptop to do some research. She accessed the news database, also searching around on Google. She was finally able to find information on the limousine business from years ago, scrolling down until she found the name of the owner.

"Edward Kaspbrak... 'this must be him.'" She said to herself, typing in his name to see if she could find anything on him. She did a search, biting her lip as she scrolled through the results. "Come on, come on... I already know he grew up somewhere in Maine..." She muttered, finally spotting something. She clicked on the result, able to access basic background credentials. She printed it out, striding over to read it. "'Location Born: Derry, Maine.' Derry...? Never heard of that town." April shook her head, typing in Derry in the Google search, eyeing the results before clicking on one. "Derry... current population; twenty-nine. Are you serious?" She asked herself, scrolling through the article. "Was reduced substantially by the great storm of '85... history of tragic events centered around..." Her eyes widened, furrowing her brows. "Uh... Leo? Leo, you may want to see this!" She called.

Meanwhile, Casey stopped, Raph beside him as they stood before what used to be a marvelous house at the outskirts of the city, but had since been reduced to ruins.

"Why are we at this dump?" Raph asked.

Casey shot him a look. "This is where I grew up. Before my dad was hacked off by the Purple Dragon."

"Oh." Raph drew back. "That sucks." He glanced at him. "So... what are we doing here?"

"This guy knows about my past. He had to have dug it up from somewhere." Casey stared at the house for a moment. "My mother and sister were held hostage here. They were never the same after that. This house was never the same. We took whatever we could grab and split. Went to the inner city. Kept on the down low." He shook his head. "Never looked back."

"So what's the point of coming here now?" Raph asked.

"This guy plays with your head. Your past. People you've lost or you're afraid to lose. Look at what happened to Donnie and April." Casey glanced at him. "He messed with the wrong guy. For some reason, he's coming after us. He's dealing with me now."

Realization settled into Raph's expression. "You're going to bait him."

"No better place to do that when it comes to me. We need to be one step ahead this time." He took hold of his hockey stick as Raph smirked.

"We're going clown hunting tonight." He said as he flipped his daggers in his hands before holding them steady.

"No joke about that." Casey replied. "Hopefully we can beat some answers out of him." He added before the pair approached the large house, making their way inside.

Back at the lab, Leo read over what April had discovered. "Do you think this creature was responsible for Derry's destruction before coming here?"

"It's possible..." She said. "So the question is, can we even handle something like this?"

"If we don't defend this city, no one will." Leo stated firmly. Truthfully, he was concerned himself, but he was determined to not let this clown make fools of them. Quite possibly, this would be their greatest challenge yet. "I wonder if it would be possible to go there... maybe there's something there among the ruins that could help."

"I don't know if it's wise to just up and leave." Donnie spoke up. "What if that thing is waiting for us to leave, and then strikes again?"

"He's been striking even while we're right here waiting on him. Even in our own homes." Leo said. "That is a fair point, Donnie. April, what do you think?"

"Well... I could go, but I don't really want to go alone." She pursed her lip. "If only there was someone I can contact. I should do some more research, see if there's someone I can get in touch with. This Edward guy is out of the question... he died decades ago. Even still... I have a feeling there might be someone out there who can help me. Edward couldn't have been the only one to know about this, even if Derry was as small of a town as it was."

"That would be ideal..." Donnie said.

"If I can gather testimony from someone who dealt with this creature, I can push back against Grayson's accusations. Thankfully, the detectives already took Leo as a suspect off the table. There was an article on it today. So, at least we're making some strides in this." April said.

"I'm not really concerned about that guy right now, April." Leo said.

"Well, if he gets elected and then throws you all in some cage because he has something against mutants, who is going to help me take this creature down, Leo?" April responded, and he sighed, unable to argue her point.

"Let me look into this. We're making progress, let's just try to roll with what we have." She said before going back on Donnie's laptop.

At Casey's abandoned home, he shook his head as nostalgia hit him like a hockey puck, trying to focus. "This place has been so ransacked as it is, hard to tell if this creep was the one who took anything or if it was someone else."

"Will he even come here? How do you know if he'll show up, or if he even knows anything about this place?" Raph asked.

"He knew about my history with the Purple Dragon. He's done some

digging, he's bound to know about this house." Casey answered, rummaging through a few things.

"Woah woah woah- hey. Stop." Raph said suddenly, holding his hand out. "I heard something."

"Where?" Casey whispered. As soon as he did, they both looked up, the floorboards above them creaking. Raph went to stride over to the stairs, Casey stopping him. When Raph tried to shove him off, Casey grabbed his arm again more firmly. "That's what it wants. It knows we can hear him."

"There's nothing that I can't beat. It wants to ambush me, I have a few things to give it when it does." He cracked his knuckles. "It's messed with the wrong mutant."

"I know you want to kick his ass. So do I. Just wait a second. Let him make the first move." Casey hissed.

Raph curled his lip. "What the hell are we doing here, Jones? If you want to sit around and twiddle your thumbs, don't let the door hit you on the way out."

Casey swore under his breath. "Fine. Just give it another minute, at least."

"Arnold?" A voice was suddenly heard as footsteps wandered towards the staircase. "Arnold? Is that you?"

Casey froze, his spine becoming rigid. Raph turned on his headlight, illuminating the stairs as a pair of feet appeared. He was about to charge forward, but Casey held his arm out.

"Stop stop stop-!" He looked back as the individual slowly descended the stairs, staring at him.

"Arnold... you've come home."

"Why... are you here?" Casey asked, appearing genuinely disturbed.

"Casey, who the hell is this?" Raph growled.

"I miss mom, Arnold... I miss dad... I miss you." The young woman's lip trembled as she slowly moved towards them, step by step. Casey was motionless, simply staring. He then tightened his lips, slowly nodding.

"I miss you too, sis." He replied, taking a step forward. "C'mere. I'll give you one of my brother bear hugs. Just like when we were little, remember?"

Raph shifted his weight anxiously, looking between the two. Casey's sister smiled for a moment before it faded.

"Do you know what they did, Arnold? The terrible things they did to me?" She asked.

Casey pushed himself to keep it together, nodding. "I know."

"That's why you don't want to see me. It's why you can't look at me." She said, Casey and Raphael's glances meeting for a moment as she drew closer.

"I'm looking at you now." Casey finally said as she was within arm's reach. "And if you ever impersonate my family again, I will tear your face off, you freak!" Casey shouted before swinging his hockey stick, smacking it into the side of his sister's face. Raphael dashed to grab her from behind as she began to hiss and struggle, jerking her head up as she smiled darkly.

"You came for me, didn't you? Didn't think I'd already be waiting, huh? Surprise!" The voice of the twisted clown shouted, the young woman laughing maniacally. "You like surprises, don't you, Arnold?" She said before opening her mouth wide, Casey having to reel back as vomit sprayed all over the floor. Raphael tightened his grip as she began to turn back into the clown, his iron-like grip increasing pressure as the monstrosity thrashed and struggled, screeching loudly. Finally, everything stopped when a snap was heard. The clown went limp, Raphael grimacing as he tossed the creature aside. It lay motionless on the floor, not uttering a sound. Casey glared at it for a moment before his gaze met Raphael's, the pair exchanging a nod. Raphael got on his communicator then, calling his brothers.

"Raph? Where the hell are you?!" Leo exclaimed. "You can't just up and leave here without-"

"It's done." He said, staring at the ground where it lay. "I'll tell you more when we get back."

"Wait, what?! What do you mean, 'it's done?!'" Leo questioned.

"Let's just say that the world has one less killer clown in it." Raph replied a bit smugly. "Didn't take much."

"I have to see this for myself. Can you can bring the body back here? Where the hell are you guys?"

"Oh yeah, we're going to carry a clown corpse through the city, THAT won't look suspicious." Casey couldn't help but laugh.

Raph rolled his eyes. "If anyone else can even SEE this guy... remember when he didn't even show up on security footage that Donnie looked up?"

"Well... can you hide it there, then? We can go back tomorrow and inspect it, bring it in for evidence." Leo said.

"Yeah, I'll lock him in the cellar. This place was ransacked a while ago, so not like anyone's going to bother the place." Casey said from where he was.

"Alright, let's do this." Raph said.

Once down there, Casey grunted when he dropped the weight he had been carrying. "Son of a bitch... this shithead is heavy." He said, shoving the body to the side. He went over, grabbing some old boards, nails, and a hammer. He boarded up the windows, chain locking the door shut once he and Raph were back upstairs. They exchanged a glance for a moment, Raph nodding.

"Let's see what that asshole has to say about this once April makes a report on this." Raph said.

"Who are you talking about?" Casey rose a brow, the pair heading out of the disheveled house.

"Roberts." Raph replied. "April said that the DA's already ruled out Leo as a suspect in Amelia's murder, but this guy has it out for us. He'll try to get us for something else. We've got to smack that down, and fast."

"Well, no disputing this. It's too bad we couldn't interrogate that thing more." Casey thought aloud.

"Listen, that bastard got what he had coming." Raph said, pointing a finger at Casey. "It went after all three of my brothers. You mess with them, you mess with me. You helped me do what I set out to do." He said before they continued back to the nearest manhole, going underground.

Later on, after the pair returned, April's brows rose in disbelief. "Um... you guys?" She glanced over her shoulder. "I think I just hit the jackpot here."

When Raph and Casey returned, she placed Donnie's laptop on the table to show all of them what she had found. "Isn't that the famous guy from California? A ton of movies have been made from his books." Casey asked.

Donnie perked up then. "Stephen King? I've been reading some of his work. It's pretty out there, but-"

"No..." April replied. "William Denbrough. Look... his birthplace was Derry, Maine. He was raised there... and check this out." She typed a few things, pressing the enter key. "He lost his younger brother when he went missing one day in 1957. His body was never found." April looked up at them. "1957... that means-"

"That was exactly fifty four years ago..." Donnie cut her off. "... divide that by two and it's twenty-seven." He looked up. "April... didn't you message earlier that in Derry, there was a reported tragedy-"

"Every twenty-seven years." She finished, looking around at them. "First thing tomorrow, I'm setting up a private video conference with William. He has to know something about this."

"April, look... Raph and I got this guy." Casey said. "Maybe we don't

need to go through all this trouble."

"Even still, Casey... I need statements and evidence if I'm going to bring this to Grayson." She replied.

"Wait, what?" Raph spoke up then. "Why in the hell would you talk to him about this? Just make a press conference or something, don't waste your breath talking to his face about it."

"Because I need to do one of two things. Either prevent him from being elected, which- at this rate, according to the latest polls, he's miles ahead of his opponents... or the second option, which is to convince him that mutants aren't necessarily the problem in this city. Something else is- was... and that if he really cares for his citizens, he needs to start caring about them... mutants included. If I'm directly up front with him about it, maybe it'll make more of a difference than just letting him find out through the press."

Raph scoffed. "Good luck with that."

"That would be the best case scenario, April." Leo said. "We solved one problem, a BIG problem. But all those kids are still missing, and convincing someone who clearly has something against us is not going to be achieved easily."

"I was able to convince everyone you guys existed when everyone called me crazy, wasn't I?" April smirked. "Let me try to work my magic. I'm going to try to talk to William. Then I'll go see Grayson. I'll also probably follow up with the Smiths afterwards... they'll be relieved to know that their daughter's killer has been eliminated. Hopefully, it will bring them some peace."

"I think this calls for a pizza party!" Mikey piped up.

"Mikey, you're ALWAYS looking for an excuse to have pizza." Donnie said flatly.

"Yeah, but getting rid of a scary, blood-thirsty clown is a pretty good reason. He was kind of like a big cuddly teddy bear... if big cuddly teddy bears are incredibly violent." He gulped. "Besides, I'm feeling much better. Almost good enough to go tunnel boarding!"

As Donnie pinched the bridge of his nose, April giggled, the others chuckling a bit as Mikey lightened the mood- it was something he was usually good at doing.

"Well, it's getting late... I should start heading back." April said.

"Want me to walk you?" Casey asked.

"Well, with one less killer clown on the loose, I think I'll be okay." April replied.

"There's still a whole city full of criminals and slime balls out there. Come on. You have a busy day tomorrow." Casey nodded his head towards the exit.

"Alright... you guys, I'll keep you posted." April smiled, giving them a wave. "Raph..." She nodded at him. "... thank you... for taking care of that thing."

"No need to thank me. I only regret not breaking its spine sooner." Raph replied.

As April and Casey left, Donnie sighed lightly. Now that a huge threat had been eliminated, it allowed his mind to drift to other things, subjects which had been placed on hold. One of those subjects included his feelings for April. He already regretted the fact that he had been cornered- quite literally- into revealing some of these feelings- in his opinion, prematurely. With April still having a career and a life above ground that she had to tend to, and the fact that they led very different lives- her being consistently out and the open, and him remaining mostly out of the public eye- he wondered if such a match would be possible. He wondered if there would even be any consideration on her end that such a match should even be attempted. The more he thought these things through, the more downtrodden he felt, doubtful that such notions would ever become reality. He removed his glasses for a moment, running a hand down his face. In his limited exposure to the outside world, he had indeed seen the faces of many beautiful humans, even other mutants upon the rare occasion- he had heard them speak, listened to the clicking of their heels on the surface of the street or the jingle of their purses and bags. He had seen their hair sway, or bounce as they were

restricted in buns, up dos and ponytails. He had glimpses of personalities, voices, accents, scents and other amiable qualities. Since he had been reading human literature, these glimpses had been expanded like words on the pages, painting a beautiful picture of what loving a woman could be, what happiness and fulfillment it could bring.

Knowing April, seeing how well she seemed to fit like the characters woven into the pages of the books he read, he couldn't deny that despite his lack of full experience with love and companionship, that what he felt for her was genuine. It was not based completely on circumstance or experience, or lack thereof. He did not believe that if some other female individual were to involve herself in his life, have equal bearing, that he would become as easily and fully attached to them. He believed in his heart that the qualities which April possessed, those which sparked his attraction, were April's alone. Did he have a right to claim to know this for sure, being so secluded from the world? He wasn't entirely sure of the answer- it was an answer he did not want to know. All he knew was that his heart longed for the woman he would do anything to protect and keep safe, even risk his own life for. Sometimes, he found himself hoping that the love stories and poems he spent his free time reading would somehow become his own story. At the end of the day, however, he was a turtle of wisdom, intellect. He could not allow himself to dream too much- it was unbecoming of him.

And so, these thoughts remained just that- thoughts. Silent and reserved within his own mind and heart, locked away to be hidden from the world, just as he was.

So, here we are! Is the killer clown terrorizing New York City truly defeated? Is Raphael overestimating himself, or underestimating his enemy? Will April still go through with her research and uncover any secrets? Will the turtles get Grayson off their shells? Find out the answers to these and more in the next update! In the meantime, thank you again for reading! See you next time, and have a great weekend!

10. The Unpleasant Discovery

Good evening, readers! I am back with a new update! It's a bit shorter this time, but fear not! There is much more to come in due time. There isn't as much action in this chapter, so if you're trying to have a bit of a more relaxing day, then this is perfect for you! Without further ado, please enjoy!

The next day, Casey went to work at the pizzeria, and April went to work. After her morning shift, she pulled out her personal laptop, having collected William Denbrough's contact information. April settled in as she logged onto a secure face time session, placing in the call. She had what she was able to research beforehand next to her, stacked in a neat pile as she waited with anticipation. Her spine stiffened when there was an answer, mustering a smile. "Good morning, Mr. Denbrough... thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me."

"Of course, Ms. O'Neil." The older man smiled. "Though I'm a bit shocked that someone across the pond wants to interview me." He chuckled.

"With all due respect, sir... the questions I have don't have anything to do with your film work. This is why I set this up with heavy encryption codes... it's very important that you tell me everything you know."

He blinked, pursing his lip. "About what, Ms. O'Neil?"

Meanwhile, the turtles navigated their way towards Casey's old family home on the other side of the city, Raph leading the way as he gloated to the others.

"I'm tellin' you... I got him good." Raph bragged as he flexed a bicep.

"I still won't believe it until I see it." Leo replied as he shook his head a bit.

Donnie coughed lightly into his fist. "I mean, I could have done the

same thing at April's apartment... but I thought I might, you know, accidentally hit her..."

"Whatever, Don, you were freaked out and you know it." Raph smirked. "You ladies need a lesson from the boss here." Leo shot a look at this.

"Can't blame him, though..." Mikey muttered. He was still a bit under the weather over what had happened. His brothers had told him that he could stay behind, but he insisted on coming. He needed to face this thing and be brave. Splinter had told him that fear was just another enemy he had to overcome- though difficult, it was part of embracing the way of the ninja.

Meanwhile, William was a little confused at first as to why she was asking him such strange questions.

"I'm not sure why you're asking me about... clowns, Miss O'Neil." Bill chuckled. "I mean... sure, I have featured one or two in my books, but I'm not an expert on the subject. Besides, I thought you stated you were not calling to ask me about my work?"

April bit her lip, not expecting such an abstract response from him. What was going on here? Was it possible he really couldn't remember anything? Or perhaps he was just avoiding the topic out of sheer displeasure. After all, who knows what sort of mental traumas he experienced from the happenings she researched.

"Mr. Denbrough, you used to live in a town called Derry, correct? In Maine?" She decided to ease in a bit slower.

"Yes, I did grow up there... I didn't live there very long though." He furrowed a brow. "Is this a part of some biography of sorts?"

"No." April cleared her throat. "You... had a brother, did you not?." She asked, feeling a spark of hope when he looked up at her with what seemed to be enlightenment. "Um, George, I believe his name was."

A pause. "... Yes... Georgie..." His eyes seemed to glaze over. He didn't speak further, almost appearing to be in a trance.

April felt a chill trickle down her spine when the previously cheerful man was reduced to silence. "Mr. Denbrough... sir?"

The man became more and more distraught by the moment, his voice trembling. "He th- thrusts h- his f- fists aga- ainst the posts and st- still insists he s- sees the g- ghosts..."

Alarmed, April shook her head worriedly. "Mr. Denbrough? Are you alright?"

The four approached the house, Leo and Donnie looking on with surprise. "I forgot that Casey had come from a well-off family." Leo said.

"It's really a shame. This looked like it was a very nice house at one point or another." Donnie commented.

"Look, we can muse over this dump later. Come on." Raph said, moving forward to head inside.

"Hey, Raph?" Mikey asked.

"What?" He glanced over his shoulder for a moment.

"I wish I was as brave and tough as you are." Mikey said, smiling a bit. Raph's expression softened for a moment.

"Hey. You're alright, kiddo." He smirked, patting his shell. "Just remember..." He said a bit lower. "... I'm looking out for you."

"G- Georgie... lost his arm... the b-boat, It... lured him with th- the paper boat I made him..." Bill stared at April through the screen as he began to stutter heavily. "H- He was taken... b- but I don't understand... we killed It. T- Twice, we faced It... a- and Eddie... it killed Eddie."

"Do you mean Edward Kaspbrak? And what is 'IT,' exactly? Mr. Denbrough, take a deep breath. No one is going to see this. This is heavily encrypted." April assured him.

At this, Bill forced a chuckle. "It sees everything, April... I- It... knows the thing you fear the most... and then becomes that thing."

Raph opened up the closet door with a dramatic flourish, looking rather pleased with himself. "Go ahead. Look inside, if you dare." His brothers cautiously peered in simultaneously, keeping their guard up. Raph stood to the side as he did so, smirking to himself. A moment later, they drew back, glaring at Raph.

"Is this a sick joke, Raphael?" Leo growled. "We don't have time to deal with YOU clowning around too!"

"What?" Raph asked as he did a double take, his smug expression melting into one of confusion. He shoved them aside, his eyes widening in shock.

The cellar closet was empty. The body was gone.

Everything he and Casey had used to bind him was torn to shreds on the floor, as if it had been made of paper. He shook his head, his brain scrambling madly in a desperate attempt to come up with some form of explanation, but he could only look back at the others wordlessly, a rarity for the normally arrogant, formidable turtle.

"Mr. Denbrough, please, what are you trying to-"

"P- P- Pen... Pen..." Bill Denbrough was finding it increasingly difficult to speak, becoming more tense by the moment. "P-Pennywise."

The only other trace left in the cellar closet was a message sprayed in red paint; 'Pennywise Lives.' All four turtles looked on in silent confusion, dreading what this ominous message could mean.

April furrowed a brow. "Pennywise? Is that the clown? Is that his name?" Bill trembled as he nodded, April swallowing thickly as her spine became rigid. "Mr. Denbrough? Are you going to be alright?"

He finally calmed after a few moments. "Please... forgive me, Ms. O'Neil." He finally spoke. "You must understand something. This... creature... is not what it seems. It... has the ability to imitate your greatest fears, as well as lure you with a sense of false trust. Its manipulative and deceiving nature is what makes it the most dangerous. It doesn't just instill fear in its victims... it feeds upon the

fear it evokes. If, in fact... it has returned... you are in terrible danger. I- I can send you all the information I can give you that may help, but... Ms. O'Neil... that is all I can do. I've lost far too much. I have to protect the people I love." He then looked at her through the screen. "As long as fear exists... it may very well exist too. We were able to defeat him in the past, but if it has arisen again... then perhaps it's impossible to kill, after all..."

"Mr. Denbrough, my friend encountered it last night, he told me he managed to kill the creature. I need this information to clear their names." She replied. "See... I'm going to try to do the same think you're doing... protecting the people I love."

"I hope to God you're right, April. I truly hope you're right." He shifted in his chair. "I will send you a secure email with some materials that may help you. But... Ms. O'Neil?"

"Yes?" She replied.

"... Please... never speak to me of this again. G- Goodbye." The call was disconnected then, April slowly leaning back in her chair as she tried to process what she had just heard. A few minutes later, she received an email, opening the file. She bit her lip, printing out the materials, quickly sticking them in a manila folder before closing her laptop, hurriedly heading out of the office.

The turtles burst into their lair, the four of them chattering away anxiously.

"This is bullshit, Casey and I stuffed him in there and made that place like Fort Knox!" Raph exclaimed.

Donnie adjusted his glasses. "In that case, we have one of two scenarios, one, some vandals must have broken in, or two, that thing wasn't really dead, and managed to escape somehow-"

"I broke that bastard's spine clean in half." Raph jabbed a finger at Donnie's chest. "You could have heard the sound of it breaking from halfway across the city."

"Donnie, pull up any surveillance systems in that area, scope them for

the duration of the night and see if you can come up with anything. I'm going to contact Casey and let him in on what we found... or rather, what we didn't find." Leo said. "Raph, go and patrol, I want all eyes everywhere!"

As his siblings took to action, Mikey furrowed his brows, watching his brothers as they got down to business. He slowly turned, tightening his lips as he felt something akin to cautious determination. He marched toward the tunnel entrance, nunchukus in hand.

He wasn't going to hide behind his fear anymore. Just as Splinter had told him, he needed to confront it, head on.

April hurried up the steps of the prestigious office building, the manila folder tucked under her arm as she weaved past people in suits and professional uniforms. She approached the front desk, placing the folder down as the receptionist looked up at her.

"I need to see Grayson Roberts. It's urgent." April said, the receptionist blinking before telling her to hold on for one moment, making an internal phone call.

Moments later, April's heels clicked on the tiled floor as she made her way to his office, exhaling the breath she had been holding when she approached his door. She held up her hand, hesitating a moment before knocking on the solid wood door.

"Come in." A voice from within spoke, April opening the door and shutting it behind her. Upon seeing his visitor, Grayson looked up, blinking in surprise. "Well... Ms. O'Neil, this is certainly an unexpected surprise. Please, sit."

She cleared her throat, walking over to take a seat in one of the black leather chairs. "Mr. Roberts... forgive me for not scheduling an appointment ahead of time, but I'm afraid this is-"

"Ms. O'Neil, please." He held up a hand. "I can tell from your body language that you're in distress. We may not be particularly fond of each other, but if there is something I can be of assistance with, I would be more than happy to address any fears you have."

She swallowed, her mouth dry as she placed the folder on the desk. She took a moment to compose herself. "You're right, Mr. Roberts... we aren't particularly fond of one another. But we have one thing in common."

"What's that, Ms. O'Neil?" He tilted his head.

"Our actions... now and going forward... will have a huge impact on this city." She said, and he smiled lightly.

"That, my dear... is correct." He said.

She opened the folder, taking out some papers. "You are running for governor. We may not agree on every subject, you say you are looking out for the people of this city, right? Well, I'm doing the same. There was a threat among us, a catastrophic threat... one which was thankfully eliminated last night. This is something the people need to know about, and I need your help to share this information and vindicate the innocent victims that perished at its hands."

"It?" Grayson rose a brow. "Not... 'he?'"

"No." April sifted through the paperwork, placing down a map. "This is a town in Maine, named Derry. This creature supposedly settled there after a meteorite made contact with Earth at this location. Since that time, several centuries ago..." She placed down another paper, a centuries old artist's rendition of the bustling people of Derry- among them however, was a sinister-looking clown. "... there have been countless tragedies. Reports of a murderous clown stealing and killing the town's children, among countless other freak accidents." She looked up. "This creature was thought to have been eliminated several times, but it somehow showed up here. I think it went into its usual hibernation period, which is a duration of approximately twenty-seven years according to the frequency of the time lapse of these major freak accidents- but upon awakening, perhaps there wasn't enough of a 'food source' due to much of the town being leveled by that major storm in the 80s. It had to move in order to find more people to feed on."

Grayson silently looked over the papers, raising a brow as he nodded

slowly. "This is... extensive research, Ms. O'Neil. If you would have told me this without the documentation you provided, I would have thought you were certified insane. However, it seems even prior 'insane' claims of yours turned out to be true, so I have no reason to doubt you now, do I?"

"So... you believe me, then?" April asked.

"Yes." He shifted a bit in his chair, wincing a bit as a hand went to his back.

"Are you alright?" April asked.

"Forgive me, yes... just a bit of back pain." He tightened his lips for a moment. "Woke up on the wrong side of the bed this morning. Anyhow..." He cleared his throat, pursing his lip. "This is extremely disturbing, Ms. O'Neil. It would without question clear your mutant friends of the late increase in child abductions... and I would be willing to work with you on finding out more about this creature. There is no place for it in this city. I'll keep in touch with you on this matter, but I need time to look this all over."

April sighed with relief. "I... appreciate this, sir."

He smirked a bit. "You never cease to impress me, Ms. O'Neil. And... I am glad that despite any past animosity between us, you have sought me out. Together..." He leaned forward a bit. "We will bring our enemies to their knees."

April nodded. "I'm only concerned about the people, Mr. Roberts."

He chuckled lightly. "Believe me, Ms. O'Neil... so am I." He extended a hand, April hesitating for a moment before shaking it. She was about to head out, looking over at a vase sitting on his desk.

"Those are nice roses." She commented. "I love when family and friends send me things to my office."

He glanced over at them for a moment. "Ah, yes... these were a gift. I received them this morning." He glanced back at her. "Red is my favorite color." He gave her a nod. "Enjoy the rest of your day, Ms. O'Neil."

"Thank you... you too." She replied, exiting the office. When she did, Grayson sifted through the papers, stopping to stare at the one showing the illustration.

And that's all for today, readers! So, what do you think? How will April react when she learns of the turtles' discovery? Are they all in greater danger? Find out more in the next update! In the meantime, leave a review with your thoughts, and stay tuned for the next chapter!

11. Facing Their Worst Fear

Good evening, readers! I hope you're having an awesome Friday/start to your weekend! It's a nice calm night here, just perfect for reading a spooky story! With that said, may I present to you the next update! There's a bit of action in this chapter, so prepare yourself! I hope you enjoy!

"What do you mean he's gone?!" Casey exclaimed when he met up with the turtles after his shift. "Damn it, Raph broke the bastard in half, how in the hell is he gone?"

"We're at a loss as well..." Leo said, his arms crossed. "This thing can apparently shape shift itself into not having a broken back anymore."

"Which means nothing else we physically do to it is going to kill it." Casey assumed, cursing under his breath.

"Not exactly. Everything has a weakness, including this... creature. We just haven't found it yet." Donnie said as he sat at his computer.

"It's almost like trying to kill a boss in a game that can only be killed if you shoot at it like a target or something. I hate those." Raph curled his lip. "I like just going crazy, pummel them to dust."

"That was never up for dispute, Raph." Donnie said sarcastically, looking between his computer screens.

"Well, we don't have time to be doing all this guesswork." Leo said. "Who knows what that thing's been doing since it escaped..."

"Leonardo, what has happened? Were you able to find what you were looking for?" Splinter asked as he approached.

"No. Raph led us to Casey's family house and the body is gone." Leo shook his head, pacing around.

"You will conquer this enemy, my son. In time, you will find the answers you seek." Splinter reassured.

"Sensei, how can we be ninjas, how can we be heroes, if we can't figure out how to kill this thing?" Leo threw his hands up.

"Not all enemies can be defeated the same way, my son. It is up to you and your brothers to determine the right path. If there is something missing, you must find it." Splinter said.

"Uh, guys?" Donnie said then, getting their attention. "Speaking of 'missing...' where is Mikey?"

When Donnie posed this question, the remaining turtles and Casey looked around, their expressions blank as they all looked at one another.

Meanwhile, April was heading back, furrowing a brow when she saw police cars and sirens swarming the Smith's residence. She quickened her pace, approaching the house as her eyes widened. "What happened here?" She asked, one of the officers approaching her.

"Sorry, Ms. O'Neil... they were both found dead this morning." He cleared his throat. "So far, they're ruling it as a murder suicide."

April blinked, shaking her head slowly. "Impossible..." She furrowed her brows deeply, moving past the officer.

"Wait- Ms. O'Neil, this is a crime scene!" He exclaimed. April went inside, quickly looking around. Her eyes scanned the room, looking at blood splattered on the walls. She could hear the officer coming from behind, not far now as suddenly, everything stopped. Her eyes widened, her hand digging into her pocket for a tissue. She quickly snatched something which had been lying on the ground, having just pocketed it before the officer reached her. "Ms. O'Neil, I'm sorry... but you can't be in here with the investigation ongoing. My boss will kill me."

She nodded. "I'm sorry." She replied. "Please give me any updates you're able to get."

"I will." He said before escorting her out of the house.

April felt as if everything was moving in slow motion as she made her way towards the usual pathway underground. Raph had killed the

creature- had the murderous clown killed them before he himself was killed? Or was the dreadful thought that passed her mind the actual truth? She quickened her pace, entering the tunnels.

Leo wore a serious expression, two of his brothers in tow as they navigated the back streets. "How did I lose him? How did I lose him?!" Raph emphasized. "I didn't realize I was supposed to be his babysitter-"

"There is something out there that is killing people right now." Leo said, grabbing Raph's shoulder. "It's gone after Mikey twice. And now, he's out there somewhere, all by himself, with no one to help him if he needs it."

"So call him on the communicator then, genius." Raph spat.

"Way ahead of you." Donnie said. "I've been trying to do that while you both have been bickering like an old married couple this whole time... he's not answering." He bit his lip worriedly. "I'm trying to pull him up on the GPS unit."

"Where the hell could he have gone?" Leo muttered just above a whisper, exhaling sharply as they continued their search.

As night fell, Mikey stood in Central Park, where silence had fallen. The bustling cars and lights were a good distance away now, the youngest ninja turtle furrowing a brow as he looked around.

"M- My dad-... my sensei... says that you're different." Mikey seemed to speak to no one, glancing to and fro to see if he could detect any movement. "You're not like all the other enemies I've fought. He said to defeat you, I have to conquer my fear, so... I'm going to stand here, and stuff... and if you come, I'm not going to be afraid. I'm not going to be afraid of clowns anymore." He smiled nervously. "Y- Yeah! I'm going to kick your sorry butt!" He said as he began to move around a bit, making his way along the paths. When he passed by one of the light poles, something seemed to emerge from behind it out of thin air. Mikey's pacing slowed to a stop, his confidence swelling. He could sense something was behind him, smiling to himself. "I'm gonna get him good." He said to himself. A few moments later, he whirled around, trying to put on a scary face. When he took a step

back, he noticed the figure in the shadows did not move for several moments, his confidence waning a bit.

"Hm... that wasn't bad, Mikey."

Mikey sighed with relief. "Oh... I'm glad you're here, Raf. I hope you aren't mad, but... I want to help you guys. We're a team, and... I need to be brave like you, and Leo... even Donnie's braver than me sometimes."

"Hey. You've got some guts, Mikey." He stepped out of the shadows.

"You really think so? That means a lot coming from you." Mikey smiled. "Maybe one of these days I'll kick yours in Smash Brawl, huh?"

"Yeah, maybe..." He chuckled. "I could let you do that before I eat yours."

"Hey, come on..." Mikey nudged him. "Let me have just one, huh?"

"I'm serious. Won't be doing much with all your guts spilled out on the floor, will you?"

Mikey's smile faded a bit. "Okay, a little less funny."

"Oh... you want me to be more funny, huh?" Raph's smile began to widen to where Mikey thought it was going to extend past his face, frowning as he witnessed sharp teeth extending out of his brother's mouth. "That could be arranged."

"Raph?!" Mikey shouted as his brother emitted an inhuman screech, charging at him. Mikey was forced to run, shooting a glance or two over his shoulder as he was pursued.

"Damn it, why did he have to go all the way over here?" Leo hissed, he and his remaining brothers heading into Central Park.

"I swear, I'm going to beat him to a pulp when I..." Raph's voice faded. When Leo went to say something, he hushed him, listening. "Do you hear that?" They then heard their youngest brother cry out from a distance, the three of them sprinting into action as they ran in

the direction of the sound. "Mikey?!"

"Mikey!" Donnie shouted, tinkering with his tracker as he ran. "Vitals are elevated and increasing! He's running fast!"

Raph wasted no time, speeding ahead of them. If this thing killed Mikey, he would never forgive himself. Leo cursed under his breath before chasing after Raph.

"Hey, wait, guys what about- oh screw it..." Donnie muttered angrily, taking his portable devices with him as he brought up the rear.

Raph panicked when things became quiet suddenly. "Mikey? Mikey! Damn it... Mikey, answer me!"

He heard a scream to his right, the red-garbed turtle running towards the sound. He was gonna murder this clown, even if that meant snapping his spine a thousand times and running the pieces through a wood chipper.

"Raph, wait up!" Leo shouted.

"I don't have time to wait, Mikey is out there!" He shouted back, running through some of the trees before he was grabbed suddenly, about to start swinging when someone turned him around, pressing a finger to their lips. "Mikey! What the hell, I thought-"

"Shh..." Mikey replied. "You have to stay quiet, that thing's still around here somewhere."

"Great. I can see to it personally that I kick his ass." Raph said, about to head back out when he was held steady, a hand on his shoulder.

"It's not safe out there." Mikey frowned.

"Look. You may be scared, but I'm not. See? The others are here now. Let's go." He noticed that Mikey was tightening his grip on his shoulder. "Mikey, I'm not joking around, let's-"

"Neither am I, Raphy boy!" When Raph turned around, Mikey was no longer himself, wearing a killer grin as he opened his mouth wide to reveal rows of razor sharp teeth.

"Shit!" Raph tore himself away, about to break into a run when he was seized. He was shocked at how strong this creature was, not accustomed to anyone or anything matching his physical strength.

"Leo, Raph's being attacked!" Donnie shouted, spotting him as the pair ran towards their brother, skidding to a stop when the clown chuckled darkly. Raph was about to counter attack when the clown's hand formed sharp claws, digging into his shoulder and forcing him to his knees.

"The bigger they are, the harder they fall..." He giggled maniacally. "You can ask that bloated sack who choked on a few galaxies when you see him in HELL!" He spat. "I'm going to make a feast out of this one, and I'm going to make the smaller one a nice dessert! If the two of you play nice, I'll let you live... I'll go back to sleep in due time, and you can spend the rest of your lives rotting away in that sewer you call a home!"

"Guys... go find Mikey." Raph growled, Leo furrowing his brows as Donnie shook his head. "I said go find Mikey!"

"You're my brother, Raph!" Leo shouted. "I'm not leaving you behind." He said as the clown grinned. "Your name is Pennywise, isn't it?"

"Ohhh... you did get my little message after all, hm? I had no idea turtles could read!" He cackled. "That's right! I'm Pennywise, the dancing clown! Now that we're not strangers anymore... maybe I could invite you ALL over for dinner, then!"

"Let go of my brother!" A voice shouted from behind suddenly, Mikey hopping up to pounce on the clown. He took his nunchukus, throwing his hands around Pennywise's large head and yanking back, the bind of his weapons strangling him. "Raph, run!" Mikey screamed, trying desperately to keep a grip on his weapon.

Donnie dove in, helping Raph to his feet. "He's too strong... how is he this strong...?" Raph said, his voice a bit hoarse.

"Mikey!" Leo shouted as Pennywise flipped Mikey off his back, the turtle landing in front of him on his shell. Pennywise hovered over him, screeching as Mikey cried out, rolling to the side and hopped

back to his feet. He was a bit beat up, but thankfully had managed to evade most of the clown's attacks up until now. Leo charged forward, impaling him with his samurai swords and lifting him up. At this, Pennywise turned his head completely around to look down, Leo grimacing.

"Do I look like an umbrella to you, little boy blue?" Pennywise laughed before screeching loudly, blood spewing from his mouth. Leo shut his eyes as he was doused, lowering his swords to kick Pennywise off of them.

"How in the hell do we kill this thing?!" Raph shouted.

"You can't kill me! You can't kill fear!" Pennywise exclaimed.

"Guess what, shithead? I'm not afraid of some cheesy get up like you." Raph growled.

"But you do fear something else, don't you, big boy?" Pennywise said, backing up as the turtles held their weapons in hand. "There are all sorts of fresh pickings in this city... enough to make me stronger than ever. You think your bravery is enough, don't you? You'll see... that just like fear..." He grinned darkly. "... I am everywhere."

Raphael whipped out one of his daggers, tossing it as it soared through the air. Pennywise ducked, evading the weapon as it embedded into a tree behind him. When he strode over to retrieve the weapon, he discovered that Pennywise had disappeared. "Damn it!" He shouted, slamming his fist against the tree, only to wince.

"Raph, calm down..." Donnie strode over, inspecting his arm. "We have to get this treated. There's some minor muscle damage."

"I'm gonna murder that thing." Raph snarled under his breath, his other brothers joining him as they all headed home.

Once back underground, Leo took Mikey, pinning him against the wall. "What the hell were you thinking, Mikey?! You weren't thinking at all!"

"I'm sorry, I just... sensei said I had to conquer my fear, and..." His voice faded.

"We are a team, we never face anything alone!" Leo jabbed his finger at him. "You could have been killed out there, Raph nearly had his arm torn off!" He let up, sighing when Mikey frowned at him.

"I just want to be as good as you guys." Mikey said quietly, Leo shifting his feet a bit.

"You ARE as good as us, Mikey. Being afraid doesn't make you any less of a ninja. But you can't be going out on a suicide mission all by yourself without even running anything by us. I'd rather you be scared, than stupid." Leo said, Mikey nodding.

"Okay... I'm sorry, Leo." Mikey replied.

"You're forgiven. Go clean up." Leo said, sighing once again as he pinched the bridge of his nose. He heard footsteps approach, stopping a short distance away. "I had no idea that he snuck out of here, sensei." He said, turning around to look at his father.

"You have nothing to feel badly for. You retrieved him and returned him here safely." Splinter replied.

"Sensei, he could have lost his life tonight. Raph was hurt-"

"But they didn't." Splinter took a step closer. "Part of being a good leader, Leonardo, is knowing that you cannot carry the entire world on your shoulders. You must know how to delegate. Spreading yourself too thin makes you weak. You must allow your brothers to carry as much weight as you, like the legs of a table."

Leo nodded. "I understand."

Just then, Leo and Splinter looked up as a third pair of footsteps approached, relaxing when they realized it was April. However, concern grew when they saw her uneasy expression. "Leo... we have a huge problem." She said.

"So do we. Come on." Leo nodded towards their home entrance, the three heading inside.

Alright then! What did you think? Does Mikey realize how lucky

he is to be alive? Do the turtles now have some idea of what they're really up against? What will April do now that the Smiths have been murdered? Find out more in the next chapter, and please leave a review with your thoughts in the meantime! Thank you for reading!

12. Kill The Lights

Good afternoon, readers! I hope you had a fantastic weekend! If you've got the Monday blues, here is a bit of a longer update today to turn your frown upside down! Get ready for some intense action and story unraveling, because this chapter is chock full of it! I won't ramble on much longer, so please sit back, grab something delicious to munch on, and enjoy this update!

Once they were all gathered, Raph hissed as he leaned back, his shoulder bandaged. Donnie pulled out a chair for April, smiling momentarily while Leo updated her on what they discovered at Casey's family home, as well as their encounter in Central Park.

"Are you okay, Mikey?" April asked, frowning lightly.

"I'm doing much better now that you're here." He smiled. Donnie exhaled with a hint of annoyance.

"Yeah, worry about him. I'm just chopped liver." Raph rolled his eyes as Leo shot him a look.

"I can go to the pharmacy and run some things back here that will help." April offered.

"See Raph, she does care." Mikey smiled.

"You better care that I don't smash your face in." Raph snapped at him. "You're the one who sent me on a wild turtle chase in the first place."

"Enough, Raph." Leo said firmly before returning his attention to April. "Where is Casey?"

"Got caught up at the pizzeria. I'm going to stop by there on the way home so I can keep him on the same page." April said.

"You shouldn't be roaming around at night by yourself. That thing-Pennywise... is still out there. He catches you alone and none of us

are nearby to help you, you're toast." Donnie said.

"She looks like she'd be more like red velvet cake, actually." Mikey nodded to himself, smiling a bit as he did a double take. "What?" He asked when Donnie stared at him flatly. "Plain toast is boring. April is NOT boring, bro. I love Red Velvet cake." Donnie only rolled his eyes, shaking his head.

"Anyway... Donnie, I'm giving you this." April gave him a flash drive, to which he rose an inquisitive brow. "Those are all the files that William Denbrough sent to me when I spoke to him today. It was an... interesting conversation, to say the least. Any information he had to offer on this Pennywise- clown thing, is there. But I found something more disturbing..." April closed her eyes for a moment. "Later on, I went to see if I could speak to the Smiths again."

"And?" Leo asked.

"... They're dead, Leo." She said, the other turtles displaying shock in their expressions. "Police were all over... so far it's being deemed a 'murder-suicide.'" She scoffed. "I know for a fact that isn't the truth and I don't need a major in forensic science to know that."

"Well, I've always known you were pretty smart, April." Donnie said, biting his lip when Leo stared at him flatly for a moment.

"Anyway... so I was reeling over that to begin with, and then I found this." She dug into her pocket, taking out a small plastic bag with an object inside. Donnie held up the bag, raising a brow.

"Is that... a rose petal?" He asked.

"That came from inside the Smith's house. Look, it seems weird... but when I had been speaking to Grayson, he had a bouquet of red roses like this in his office. He said he had gotten them as a gift just this morning." April said.

"You talked to that guy?" Raph asked.

"I did say I was going to..." April replied, Raph curling his lip.

"Did he say from who he got them from?" Raph asked. "Or where?"

"April... I know we're not crazy about him, but... this seems a bit far fetched." Leo interjected.

"Why? He can try to make us a local pariah, slander our name, why wouldn't he murder someone so he can try to point the finger at us?" Raph snapped.

"Well... maybe he just really likes flowers." Mikey said, lightly drumming his fingers on the table. Donnie rolled his eyes, shaking his head.

"Because we can't just make a crazy accusation like that without looking into the facts first... which is exactly what we and April are going to do." Leo replied.

"Fuck facts!" Raph shouted then, slamming his good fist on the table. "While you're trying to be a diplomat over here, we've got a damn alien clown at our necks and this wannabe hero of the state breathing down our backs! I'm sick of staying trapped in this box, Leo! When the hell are we going to actually take some action?!"

"When I figure out how the hell I'm going to keep everyone alive!" Leo exclaimed, Raph tightening his lips as he leaned back in his seat tensely. After taking a few moments to calm himself, Leo looked up. "Donnie."

"Y- Yes?" Donnie replied, adjusting his glasses.

"Run a scan on any surveillance devices near the Smith's residence. If you can find anything, stream footage from last night into the morning." He bowed his head, rubbing his temples. Donnie noticed this, going over to put a hand on his shoulder.

"Leo... look. You can't blame yourself for everything. I mean... I've been keeping some tabs on the news... I can see you've been up to your eyeballs in busywork, so I've been catching a thing or two. Some of those kids you have posters for have been found." He said, Leo lifting his head. "It may be giving us a hard time, but we're rattling his cage, too."

"Which means he's going to turn up the heat." Raph said before

Donnie went over to his computer.

"Speaking of turning up the heat... after I spoke to Mr. Denbrough, I was expecting Grayson to do just that, but... oddly enough, he didn't." April added.

"I still can't believe you spoke to that jerk on your own." Raph commented.

"Well, he clearly doesn't take Casey seriously, and it's not like I could just waltz into a major business facility with one of you guys... no offense." April added. "Anyway, after I told him about everything, he just seemed so... supportive."

"Seriously?" Donnie asked from his computer chair. "Are you sure he wasn't lying to your face?"

"He seemed genuinely concerned to me... he may be a jerk, but he is running for office. He needs people alive to vote for him, and if he helps stop this thing, he probably sees that as a way to improve his numbers." She shrugged. "Also, he said that he would get off your backs about this, being you're not the ones committing the crimes."

"Great. I feel so much better now." Raph said sarcastically.

"Look... I've realized that April has a point. The last thing we need is someone getting in our way while we're trying to accomplish something here. He wants to be Governor? Then he should do his job by letting us do ours." Leo said.

"Uh, guys?" Donnie said then, his eyes glued to his computer screens. "I've got something!"

"What did you find?" Leo asked as he strode over, Mikey and Raph following behind.

"I was able to pull up footage from an older model surveillance device... so the resolution isn't fantastic. Also, the Smith's house is a bit out of center shot, so the view isn't the most ideal." Donnie replied.

"Let's take a look. Play it." Leo said, Donnie pressing a couple keys

before the footage ran. April approached as it began to play, remaining silent. At first, nothing out of the ordinary was seen until someone came into view. "Can you zoom in?" Leo asked.

"Yeah, but it's going to be a bit pixelated." Donnie said, tweaking the lighting as he zoomed in. When he did, Leo widened his eyes, shaking his head.

"Impossible." He said, Raph looking over.

"What is it?" He asked.

"... Donnie, you do have the correct date, right?" Leo asked.

"Yes, Leo, the time stamp is right there." He replied flatly.

"What's wrong?" April asked.

"... That's Amelia Smith." Leo said, the others shocked when they realized that he was right.

"That's not her, Leo." Raph curled his lip. "It's that thing."

"Keep playing the footage." Leo said, Donnie pressing a few more keys. As they watched the little girl wander, they saw her suddenly stop, turning around. A second individual emerged then, a little boy who seemed to be levitating in the air.

"Uh, you guys? Since when can people hover in the air?" Mikey asked. "And how can I learn to do that?"

"I don't think you want to know in this circumstance, Mikey." Donnie asked. "Whoever that is, she has him under some kind of trance."

"Wait a second." April spoke up, pointing at the screen. "Donnie, stop the video for a second." He did, zooming in a bit. "That's Caleb Walters." She said, Leo looking back at her as she took out her phone, pulling up a picture to hold up. "That's definitely him."

"That thing has him then." Leo hissed. "Play more, Donnie." As the footage went on, they watched as "Amelia" walked up to the Smith's house, eventually finding a way inside. The boy hovered on the small

porch, Donnie fast forwarding several minutes before the door opened, a hand reaching out to pull the boy inside. Another several minutes passed before the door opened once again, Amelia emerging covered head to toe in blood. April widened her eyes when she saw she was holding a bouquet of roses, slowly making her way down the street with them. Leo tightened his lips, shaking his head as he took a step back. He slammed his fist down, bowing his head. "That's it. He's dead. I let it happen again."

"Leo, wait a second. I overheard the police speaking to one another at the crime scene. They never mentioned finding the boy's body." April said.

"Because it eats people, April! He's gone!" Leo exclaimed.

"Then why didn't it eat the Smiths? Why leave them behind and not Caleb?" April asked.

"Ahh!" Mikey exclaimed then, taking a step back. "That kid is creepy!"

Donnie cleared his throat, glancing over his shoulder as Leo and April looked back up at the screen. The footage was now showing Amelia having stared right into the camera, smiling sinisterly. "Leo... this may be a good time to see where exactly she went with those roses. It can help us figure out if they are the same ones from Grayson's office."

"You're right. Donnie, can you track her movements through the night?" Leo asked.

"It will take me a bit, but yeah, I can manage-" Donnie blinked, pressing one of his keys a few times.

"Come on, Donnie, I don't want to look at this anymore, change it to something else." Mikey said.

"I'm trying, Mikey, but for some reason it won't- woah." Donnie held his hands up as the lettered keys began to illuminate without being touched, a message beginning to form on the screen. "What the-..." Donnie looked between the keyboard and the computer screen, becoming increasingly uneasy.

"How are you doing that?" Raph asked.

"I'm not doing it, Raph, do you not see my hands?" Donnie replied.

"Wait, you're not being hacked, are you?" April asked worriedly.

"Impossible, I have state of the art firewall and cyber defense programs-

"Guys." Leo said, taking a step forward as a message continued to form on the screen. Leo began to read it aloud. "Caleb is still alive. If you want him, decide which one of you is going to be his replacement. If you don't have one in mind, I will decide for you. Come see me tomorrow for the party, you're all invited!" So that's why it's doing this. It wants to make a trade."

"This guy's really getting on my nerves." Raph growled lowly.

"Leo, if I may have an input here... I think this is a trap." Donnie said.

"I know that, Donnie, but if there's even a slight chance we can save Caleb, I can't risk it." Leo said.

"Um, you guys?" Mikey spoke, appearing uneasy.

Donnie exhaled sharply. "April, do you mind holding that flashlight for me while I try to tweak these wires?" Donnie asked.

"So what, you're going to put one of us on the line?" Raph asked. "Who are you going to offer up for trade? Me? Mikey?"

"I'm not trading any of you." Leo shot him a look. "We just have to make him think we are."

"Guys..." Mikey whimpered, taking a step back.

"Oh, so you're going to leave one of us to just fend for ourselves, then. Is that it?" Raph snapped.

"If you don't think that my idea is a good one, maybe you can offer a better suggestion." Leo snapped back.

Raph curled his lip. "Nice to know that my opinion actually counts for once in this family-"

"Do you not see that people are dying out there?!" Leo exclaimed, getting in his brother's face. "We are ninjas, we are supposed to protect people and we're failing to do that! So unless you have something to contribute other than pointless criticism, get off my shell, Raph!"

"GUYS!" Mikey shouted, backing up from the computer screen. The pair turned around, Donnie and April looking up from his control panel. They all began to back up as on the computer screen, Amelia began to grow in height, her spine elongating as her arms drew into her clothing. She then lurched, bowed forward before shaking violently. When she finally snapped her head up, it was no longer Amelia.

"What the hell is this...?" April breathed.

Just then, all of Donnie's computer screens changed to something different; some youtube videos, some of his reports, some were indistinguishable. One by one, they switched to a close up of Pennywise, and when they were all of his face, the entire power unit shut down. April gasped as they were all cloaked in pitch black darkness, feeling Donnie take her arm to pull her close. She fumbled for her phone, illuminating the flashlight app on it. As Donnie kept her close, his computer screens began to flicker at random, the room illuminating with erratic flashes of white light.

"Everyone form a circle, shell to shell, now!" Leo shouted.

"What about sensei?" Mikey asked.

"Do not fret, I am here." Splinter's voice was heard, Mikey sighing with relief. "I have taught you well. I have taught you to fight your enemies. But, there is no need for you to fight now." He spoke. "All you need to do..."

"Mikey." Donnie whispered uneasily.

"Uh, you're interrupting Sensei." Mikey gave him a look. "I don't want

to end up in the hashi, do you?"

Donnie furrowed a brow. "Mikey, sensei wasn't in the-"

"... is float."

Raph widened his eyes. "Get back, get back!"

Suddenly, who they thought was Splinter dashed forward, baring razor sharp teeth as the group was pounced upon. Donnie yanked April out of harm's way, Raph taking the heat as he tried to hold off the snapping teeth just inches from him.

"Raph!" Mikey shouted, jumping onto the rat's back and using his nunchukus to yank it back by its neck. High pitched screeches echoed through the lair, Mikey crying out as he was flipped off, scrambling to get to his feet. He shielded himself as he was about to be attacked, when Leo slammed into the side of the Splinter imposter. He was about to swipe his sword when he felt something curl around his arm, unable to pull it back as he was restricted by the imposter's tail. He used his other sword to sever it, the imposter shrieking loudly. As Leo tried to untangle the tail from his arm, Donnie jumped in, striking the imposter with his bo. He was about to strike again when the imposter clamped down on the weapon, tearing it out of Donnie's hand. Claws extended from slender, gnarled fingers, about to charge when a voice stopped him.

"Pennywise!" April shrieked. Their gazes met as the lights kept flashing through the darkness from Donnie's computers.

"Well... if it isn't little April O'Neil... sweet and delectable. Yes... your fear is growing... you don't want anything to happen to the only family you have now, do you?" As Pennywise spoke, he slowly transformed back into a clown, features changing with the flashing lights.

"April, don't provoke it!" Donnie shouted, hopping to his feet. He went to go to her, but Pennywise stepped between their path, smirking at Donnie over his shoulder.

"I swear, if you do anything to her-"

"You'll what, Donnie Darko? Cry your eyes out? Good... eyeballs are juicy and chock full of nutrition."

"Where is Splinter?" She demanded, Pennywise returning his focus to her

"Gee... I don't know. Maybe I turned him into 'ratatouille' already. But you, April O'Neil... you would make a fantastic hors d'oeuvre!" Pennywise hissed before emitting a screech, charging at her.

"APRIL!" Donnie sprinted after the creature. It was now within several feet of where April was backed up against the wall when something curled around his waist, hurling it away. The true Splinter stood near her, taking a protective stance.

"You will not harm April, or my sons." Splinter said lowly, taking hold of his chin hair to swish it in a challenging fashion.

Pennywise cackled as Splinter's expression changed along with the clown himself as he took on another form. Now, Shredder stood before them, speaking in a deep voice. "You fell against this once, didn't you, rat? I'll make sure you don't fall again!" He shouted before unsheathing dozens of blades, hurling them through the air. "You're going to float, this time!"

Splinter stood his ground, dashing out of the way as the blades embedded in the wall behind him. As they did, the blades began to transform, ninjas in dark clothing flipping off the wall to join in the attacks.

"Dad!" Leo took the opportunity to land a hit on the Shredder impression, embedding his sword in its back. The disguised clown shrieked as the remaining brothers pursued the ninjas. As they sliced and attacked through them, they turned to dark vapor before disappearing. One last ninja ran for April, who grabbed a tire iron and struck their head with it. The ninja reeled back, Splinter wrapping his tail around it and flinging it across the space where it dissipated into vapor upon landing.

"Come on, we've got to help Leo!" Mikey shouted as his blue-masked brother was hurled back. As Mikey went to help his brother to his

feet, the Shredder impersonation began to change into something more horrific. A metal jaw unhinged, razor sharp iron teeth extending. Steel claws grew from the metallic hand gauntlets, embedding in the ground. Leo swayed a bit as Mikey held him steady, none of the turtles believing what they were seeing. It then looked at April, who stared in horror as a pair of glowing lights illuminated the pair of spaces in the helmet where one would normally peer out of. As they did, time seemed to stop. April felt as if the pair of lights pierced straight through her, latching onto her very soul. She could no longer feel the ground beneath her feet, as if she was weightless. All she could see now was blinding light, the sounds around her muffled as she felt her consciousness slipping.

"What is it doing to her?!" Donnie screamed.

"Don't you see...?" The false Shredder spoke in dual voices. "I'm taking her to all the others. To the place where everyone floats. You see... she isn't afraid. Not like all of you. You fear what you can't defeat." At this, Donnie mustered up his courage. It would be a cold day in hell before he let this thing take April from him.

"Donnie, wait-!" Leo shouted, but Donnie was done with hesitation. He charged forward, the horrific jaw beginning to open impossibly wide as many lights began to replace the pair coming from the fading eye sockets. The grinding of metal against metal sounded, meaning to clamp down its unhinging jaws upon Donnie when he came close enough. In his moment of blindness, his brothers could see the fatal mistake he was about to run straight into.

"Donnie!" Raph shouted, charging forward as he hopped up, flipping through the air and landing on the clinging, clanging horror. He grabbed the upper jaw of the monstrosity, blinding light shining from within its metallic throat as finally, he tore off the upper half of the gnashing teeth, hurling it behind him. He hopped off as the remainder of the nightmarish Shredder impersonation began to shake and tremble, its metallic body crushing inwards until once again, Pennywise stood before them.

"The manner in which it can change into such destructive forms..." Splinter breathed. "This is unlike anything I have ever seen."

"April!" Donnie shouted once he gave Raphael a nod, trying to prevent her from ascending any further into the air and bring her back to consciousness.

Leo stopped his brother as he was about to pursue the clown again. "Raph, listen to me, we have to try to tackle this threat together."

"You think you're going to try and eat my brother?! Eat THIS, freak!" Raph shouted, shaking Leo off as he charged forward. Pennywise smirked, his jaw opening wide to scream, only for Raph to shove one of his daggers down its throat and right through the back of its head. "Who's big and tough now, huh?! We're not afraid of Shredder, and we are not afraid of you!" Unfortunately, as Raph shouted, the clown clamped its sharp teeth down on his arm, the red-masked turtle screaming in pain. At this, he began to punch the clown's face. "Get it off, GET IT OFF!"

"Leo, you can't!" Mikey shouted. Leo shook off the heavy blow from earlier, charging to pounce on Pennywise's back. He grabbed his head to pull him back, Mikey and Donnie running over to pull the two apart. They finally managed to do so, Splinter holding an unconscious April as sinister laughter filled the air.

"Who's big and strong now, huh tough guy?" He cackled. "Stop clowning around, you big oaf!"

"Raph!" Leo grabbed his shoulder, hissing a bit from the action.

"Aww... the leader's losing control over things, huh?" Pennywise smirked.

"You made us a deal, Pennywise." Leo said, mustering the strength to stand tall, taking a step forward. "Live today, fight again tomorrow. Give me your word that you'll give us Caleb back, alive and in one piece."

"Are you really willing to give up one of your other oversized brothers for some little brat?" Pennywise hissed.

"Your word." Leo said firmly.

"Don't worry. You'll see little Caleb tomorrow... I'll shine him up,

make him all new again. Go to Central Park, just like before. We'll have us a grand old time." Pennywise smiled ominously before disappearing in the shadows. Moments later, the electricity flickered back on, Donnie striding over to Splinter to take gentle hold of April.

"April. April, please wake up..." He said lowly, gently patting her face.

"What in the hell is wrong with you?!" Raph suddenly shouted at Leo, who looked at him in confusion. "You think you can just give one of us up, just like that?!"

"Raph, listen to me." Leo held his hands up. "You know I would never-"

"I know?! No, I don't know, Leo! I don't know what the hell you think you're planning!" Raph growled.

"Raphael." Splinter approached him. "Leo has a right to explain his actions." At this, Raph tightened his lips, simply glaring at his brother.

"Raph... you know that I would never give any of you up. You, Donnie, Mikey... you're my brothers." Leo stopped within inches of where Raph continued to glare at him. "Beginning tomorrow, I'm leaving you in charge of the team."

Raphael scoffed. "Are you kidding?"

"No. Because tomorrow, I'm giving myself up." When he said this, Raph furrowed his brows a bit. "That's what a leader does. A leader sacrifices."

Mikey frowned deeply. "What?! Are you crazy? You can't do that!"

"Leonardo." Splinter placed a hand on his shoulder. "Think about what you are contemplating."

"I can fight. I at least have a shot at defending myself. But those little kids out there, they're no match against this monster. Better me than them." Leo said.

"You're not going anywhere." Donnie said suddenly, still holding April.

Leo sighed. "Donnie, don't tell me what to-"

"If you give yourself up, it's only going to make the rest of us weaker, decrease our chances of actually fending ourselves and this city against this thing, and you just told Raphael you would leave him in charge of this team upon doing so." Donnie replied.

"So what are you saying, Donnie?" Leo asked.

"You are a part of this team, Leo. No one is sacrificing anything or giving anyone up." Donnie said, Leo's expression softening. Just then, Donnie gasped lightly when he felt stirring. "April? O- Okay, nice and easy." He said, helping her to sit up.

"What... oh my God. Where did it-...?" April looked around, frowning deeply.

"Shh... it's okay. It's gone now." Donnie said as he kept her steady.

"Well, Leo here wants to play martyr and give himself up to that thing." Raph said, glancing at Leo.

"What?" April widened her eyes. "No no no no no, you cannot do that."

"Look, it's all I can think of." Leo groaned as he rubbed his hand over his face. "The more time we let that thing run rampant, the less of a chance we have to save Caleb, to save anyone!"

"You listen to me, right now." Raph took a step towards him. "I know we fight a lot. We butt heads. We don't always see eye to eye." He exhaled slowly as Leo waited for him to continue. "You're our leader. Not me, not Donnie, not Mikey. You. We are not going to do this without you."

Leo smiled slowly, patting Raph's shoulder. "I couldn't have accomplished what I have without you either, Raph."

Mikey was silent for some time, looking between the two. "Okay, the

world must definitely be ending, or something." He said, Donnie glancing over at him flatly.

Alright! So, now that we have all recovered from that intense ordeal, what do you think will happen next? Will the turtles be able to save Caleb? What will Pennywise have up his sleeve? Until next time, prepare for the upcoming showdown at Central Park! Thank you again for reading, and please leave your thoughts in a review!

13. A Night in Central Park

Good afternoon, readers! Though Halloween is over, I hope you are still in the mood for some spooks! I apologize for the delay in updating, my work schedule has been pretty crazy lately! In the meantime, I will continue to try to update my fanfictions as often as possible! So without further ado, please enjoy this update!

The following day, the turtles had cleaned up their lair together, everything pretty much in order before they gathered to plan for that night.

"This is how we're going to do this." Leo began. "None of us leave each other's sight. This thing can shape shift and match our identities. The last thing we need is to be ambushed. But as long as we stay together and keep vigilant, there will be no guesswork necessary." He then rolled out a map of Central Park. "Now, we have to work the tradeoff."

"Or lack of one." Donnie said, adjusting his glasses. "Leo, this creature may be ferocious, but it's also very smart. That's putting us at a disadvantage here. It's already played with our heads, and seems to know what our next move is, as if it can read us."

"No one is smarter than you, Donnie." Leo said, glancing at him. "This is why you're going to be a critical part of this. We have to make it trust that we're serious about this first. I'm going to give Raph my weapons, and then I'm going to tell it to let Caleb go. Donnie, I'm going to need you to make sure that it's really him. No funny business. Once you do that, you get out of there, you understand? And Raph... you go with him."

Raph grimaced. "Wait, hang on a second, I'm not going to leave you and Mikey-"

"No one separates from the group alone." Leo emphasized. "We need to have at least two of us together at one time to prevent that thing from impersonating one of us. If that thing decides to go after Donnie

and Caleb, I need my strongest team player to defend him. At least if Mikey is with me, we can try to hold him off while you both make off with Caleb."

Raph hissed a sigh, not liking this idea. "Fine."

Leo nodded. "Mikey, anything you want to add?"

Mikey cleared his throat. "Uh... is there any possible way I can just stay home and-"

"NO." His three brothers said in unison.

Meanwhile, April had just finished her shift as she strode briskly down the street, glancing at the time before pocketing her phone. She entered the building where Grayson's office was, requesting to see him. She then headed down the hall, knocking on the door.

"Mr. Roberts? It's April O'Neil... would you be able to speak with me about something? It's a bit urgent." She asked through the door.

"Ah, yes, April! Just give me a couple minutes." Grayson responded, April taking a step back to wait. She took this time to briefly glance through her paperwork before tucking the folder under her arm. She glanced around the corridor, passing the time by looking at the various decorative pieces. As she was looking at a painting, she thought she saw something out of the corner of her eyes. She did a double take, glancing down the other end of the corridor. What she saw made her freeze.

A red balloon.

It seemed to have stopped, hovering for a moment before continuing to wander out of sight. April called out to see if anyone was down there, frowning uneasily before moving to follow the object. She slowed her pace when she saw the balloon make its way into a storage closet, the door having been opened a crack before it quietly shut on its own. April exhaled shakily, swallowing thickly as she took cautious steps closer to the door. She caught the scent of something unpleasant, not able to put a finger on what it could be. Her hand shakily extended, now just inches from the door. She was about to

open it, when a sudden hand on her shoulder made her jump. She whirled around, holding a hand on her heart when she saw it was Grayson.

"April, is everything alright? I went to call you in but you wandered off." He said.

"I am so sorry... I was- I was um... looking for a tissue." She quickly made up, clearing her throat.

"Ah, yes... the air is changing a bit. I have tissues in my office, come." He smiled, motioning down the corridor. As April made her way back from where she came, looking over her shoulder, she thought she could see a balloon floating from within the closet, able to see it through the slats in the door. She turned her attention in front of her, trying to shake the chills trickling through her spine. Once they were inside his office, he shut the door behind them, motioning for April to sit. "April, it's good to see you again." He said as she glanced over at the roses sitting on his desk, a blaring reminder of what she had discovered the night before- a discovery she would be making him aware of now. When she was able to think rationally for a moment, she noticed how odd it was that they were on such good terms now, having been something akin to bitter enemies only a couple short weeks ago.

"Thank you for seeing me again, um..." April said as she fumbled with her paperwork a bit, swearing under her breath when she dropped her folder. She went to pick it up, but Grayson got to it first, placing it back into her hands before taking one of them into his.

"April. There's no need to fear." He smiled calmly. "We're just here to talk today, that's all." He said, swallowing a bit.

She nodded, clearing her throat as he released her hand. "Sorry... it was a bit of a rough night for me. But... there's something I really need to speak to you about. I have reason to believe you're in danger."

Grayson rose a brow as he made his way back to his chair, sitting down. "Is that so?"

April blinked. "You... don't seem very concerned about the idea."

"April... being what I am, I'm constantly in danger. It doesn't really phase me anymore." Grayson said.

"Mr. Roberts, this is different." April opened the folder, going through some papers.

"Please... call me Grayson. We can be on a first name basis now, I think." He said as she took a few sheets out to place in front of him.

"I was able to capture security footage last night... this was the night the Smiths were murdered- see, this is their street. Look." April pointed to him, to which he tilted his head.

"There must be something askew with the time stamp. Is that not Amelia Smith?" He asked.

"It is, and it isn't." April said, to which Grayson rose a quizzical brow. "This creature that has been attacking us, that was responsible for Amelia's death, can change its appearance. It can take the form of other people, including its past victims, in order to trick and deceive new ones." She showed him more stills from the footage. "Look. These roses were taken from the Smith's house... and left at this building. The ones in your office here." April looked up. "It's coming after you now, Grayson. This isn't about politics or winning polls. This is about life and death." As Grayson looked through the stills quietly, April took out some of Donnie's DNA analytics. "This creature is... we don't know what it is, exactly. I told you last time about the fact that it appears as a clown, but I don't even think that is its real form. It's not even a mutant. It's all detailed here." April then sifted through more papers, taking out a flash drive. "This contains the audio from my interview with the Smiths, and my interview with William Denbrough." She placed everything in front of him, and he glanced up at her. "If we're going to have any chance of bringing this thing down, we both need to be as informed as possible."

Grayson nodded. "You're absolutely right, April." He said, taking the flash drive. "Whatever this creature is, it seems to be very cunning. I am very grateful that you shared this with me... the more information I have, the better I will be able to do what I need to do for this city."

He glanced over at the roses. "I will have to watch my back... at least I know now that others are watching my back for me." He smiled lightly. "I promise, April. Things are going to change. Leave everything to me. We will keep in touch. I'm going to look over this material."

April nodded, her eyes unable to keep from glancing at the roses. Grayson seemed to notice this.

"It does give them a more macabre aura, does it not?" He said. "I am all too familiar with despair and destruction, April. I promise you, here and now... I will handle this."

Back in the lair, Casey rose a brow. "And... you guys think this is going to work?"

"I don't know for sure. But if something goes wrong, I need to ensure that April and my dad have all the protection they can get. I need you here. Also, during this little operation, I need you to make sure that no one enters, and no one leaves until we get back."

Casey shrugged. "I've got no problem doing that. But seriously, Leo... this idea you've got going... it has a lot of chances for something to go completely haywire."

"I already know that, Casey. I'm already getting heat from Raph over it. But it's the only one I've got." Leo said.

"Okay. So... say this works. Say you're able to get Caleb back. What's to stop this clown- 'Pennywise' or whatever the hell his name is- from just stealing more kids? Maybe he'll just steal Caleb again once your backs are turned." Casey said. "Look. I see what you're trying to do. I'm not downplaying that. But we need to start cracking the code on how to reel this thing in. I don't think it's going to be talked out of anything, so there's only one option. We have to figure out how to kill it."

"You're right about all of that. But for now, we have to save Caleb. And we also have to show this thing that we're not completely defenseless. If it sees that we can put up a good fight, maybe he'll back down." Leo replied.

"Or maybe it'll hit back even harder." Casey said, Leo exhaling slowly as this thought sunk in.

Just then, Donnie entered the area. "Leo, all the cameras are set up. We'll hopefully have an easier time detecting Pennywise's movements once night falls."

"Good. Go get Mikey and Raph and start making preparations." Leo then looked up. "Casey, can you try to find out where April is? I want her to be here before dusk. I'm not taking any risks." As Leo said this, Donnie hesitated for a moment, opening his mouth for a moment before closing it, simply resolving to do what was asked of him.

Casey nodded, getting on his cell phone. As April was heading back underground, she felt her own buzz, taking it out of her pocket. "Casey? Is everything okay?"

"Yeah, the guys just want to know if you're on your way here." Casey said.

"I'm almost there... I gave everything to Grayson and went over what we've found with him." April replied.

"Are you really sure we can trust this guy, April? I mean, he trashed talked you, and he clearly doesn't like any of us." Casey grimaced.

"That was BEFORE there was a murderous clown terrorizing the city, Casey. Thankfully he has enough rationality to realize that we both need to take care of a bigger enemy here." April responded.

"Whatever... look, it's going to get dark out soon. The guys are all antsy about you getting down here." Casey rolled his eyes.

April snickered. "That's the new term for them, huh? 'The guys?'"

"Come on, Red... I thought you would like the idea of us all being chummy." Casey smirked.

"I'm fine as long as you're not all killing each other... okay. I'm heading underground now, I'll see you in a few." April said before ending the call, pocketing her phone.

When April arrived and settled in, Leo reviewed the plan once more with everyone. "Under no circumstances does April leave here. She has Sensei to make sure she's safe. Casey, you're going to be our emergency 'go to.' If we need you where the action is, we'll let you know. Otherwise, it's better if we have another reliable stand-in here to protect April and the lair." Casey nodded, Leo looking to his brothers. "We stay together until we meet at the rendezvous point. Then we break up into pairs when we have Caleb secured. We just need to remember one thing. No one can be alone." When the other three siblings nodded in understanding, Leo stood up straighter. "Alright then. We have a kid to save. Let's move out."

As they collected their things, Splinter remain composed; of course he was worried deep down, but he realized that if he did not have confidence in his sons, they could not have confidence in themselves. April bit her lip. She knew they were strong, especially united, but there was still a chance that they could come back in poor condition, if at all. She remembered what Donnie had told her- despite the subject matter and poor timing... she couldn't let Donnie walk out the door now without reminding him she at least cared.

"Donnie." April spoke his name, to which he stopped what he was doing to look at her. She approached him, wordlessly giving him a hug. His expression softened, hesitating a moment before hugging her back. The other turtles glanced over, Donnie rolling his eyes when Mikey joined in the hug.

"Don't worry, April." Leo nodded, gently patting her shoulder. "We'll be alright."

"Yeah, this fool is going to really get the message tonight." Raph smirked.

"Raph... remember that Caleb is our main priority. Come on, you guys." Leo said.

"April, if I don't make it, you can totally have my comic book collection." Mikey said. "And Casey, you can have-"

"Mikey." Leo snapped.

They began to make their way out, Donnie stopping to look over his shoulder. "A- April?"

"Yeah?" She replied.

"I- I, um... I..." He sighed in defeat. "I hope you stay safe."

April smiled lightly. "I hope you do, too."

Above ground, night had fallen, the team moving quickly, but quietly. Leo led the way, and despite their doubts of whether or not they could even consider trusting the deadly clown, they knew they had no other choice at this point. Either way, a confrontation with it was inevitable; at least this was one they had actually prepared for. They eventually reached Central Park, going a short way before stopping.

"Hey Donnie, any movement?" Leo asked, Donnie taking out a wireless device.

"Nothing's being detected yet..." Donnie replied.

"I really hope he doesn't want us to play hide and seek. I suck at that game." Mikey said, Raph shoving him aside in annoyance.

"Let's just go to where it said. Heart of the park. No sense wasting any time." Raph suggested.

"Raph, I know you like to jump the gun, but we have to do this carefully." Leo replied, to which Raph shook his head.

"Uh, you guys? I just picked up something." Donnie said then. Leo looked over his shoulder, Donnie holding up the GPS device.

"That's just across the way. Come on, let's go." Leo said, the four making their way to the spot indicated on the device.

They finally reached the area, Donnie furrowing his brows as he fiddled with his tracker. "Uh, are we supposed to be seeing something really epic here? Because... I just see more trees." Mikey said.

"Wait... trees... Raph, Leo, search the trees... maybe that's why he's

showing up on here even though we can't see him!" Donnie exclaimed.

"Oh shit..." Raph had a thought then. "Leo, you don't think he's-"

"Please..." A small voice sounded then. "Please get me away from here..."

"Over there!" Leo shouted, running towards the voice when he was halted, Pennywise hopping down from the tree branch above. Leo clenched his teeth as the clown grinned, reaching inside a hollow space in one of the trees to pull the child out. Caleb was whimpering, his lip trembling as he cried.

"Hm... let's see who ends up being more savory. Fear seasons the meat, you know. Leo... funny name for a turtle, don't you think? And they say rats are smart, haha! Maybe he'll be extra tasty when he finds all your hallowed out shells!"

"We have a deal, Pennywise! Give Caleb back to us!" Leo shouted.

Pennywise's smile slowly faded. "Give me yours first." He said with a sneer. Leo swore under his breath, hesitating. "Not budging, mister slow and steady? Suit yourself. I'm hungry NOW." At this, Pennywise slowly turned to look at Caleb, who widened his eyes in fear. He stared at him for several intense moments before roaring loudly, Caleb screaming as sharp teeth began to extend out. Leo was about to rush in, when a flash of orange stopped him.

"Wait!" Mikey held his hands up, frowning deeply as he shook a bit. "I- I... I'm a big baby, okay? And... you said that fear m- makes us more tasty, right?"

"Mikey, get back!" Raph shouted.

"I- I... I'm the most scared here... y- you know that. You kind of have this like, mind reader thing, so... p- please, let him go. Let him go, because..." Mikey swallowed thickly.

"B- B- Buh- Because why, magic Mike?" Pennywise mocked him, wearing a fake frown before cackling.

"Because... w- we're the good guys. A- And... this means a lot t- to us, but... it means the most to Leo. H- He's always getting me out of trouble. G- Getting me to focus." As he spoke, Leo looked at him slowly, his expression softening. "I'm not always very smart... or very strong... I- I know I act like a k- kid a lot, but... I'm not." Mikey straightened up a bit then. "Not anymore. So... So take me. Let Caleb go, and take me instead. If you're gonna be a bully, then fight someone your own size!" Mikey exclaimed, his brothers reduced to silence.

Pennywise slowly smiled, his mouth glistening with saliva. He curled his lip as he reared his arm back, tossing Caleb into the air. Donnie hissed, dashing forward. "I've got him!"

"MIKEY!" Leo shouted as Pennywise lunged at his younger brother, mouth open wide as he was about to feast on his arm. Just as he was about to clamp down, Leo emitted a loud cry, stabbing the side of Pennywise's head with one of his katanas before yanking it out. Blood trickled, levitating into the air for a moment before it twisted its head to look at him.

"Donnie, Raph, go now!" Leo exclaimed as Pennywise screeched, tackling Leo to the ground. Donnie regretfully scooped up Caleb, doing what Leo instructed. Mikey hopped to his feet before jumping on Pennywise's back, grunting as he managed to grab hold of it and shoved it away from Leo.

"Leave my brother alone!" Mikey shouted.

Donnie stopped, glancing behind him when he saw Raph had not moved, looking between his brothers. "Raph, come on!"

"Go, Raphael!" Leo screamed, his voice cracking as he slashed at Pennywise. When the creature reared its head back around, it was now the face of Amelia, looking at him with a pitiful expression.

"Why couldn't you save me, Leo?" Her little voice spoke. "You let me die." When Leo hesitated, Mikey took up his nunchukus, charging in for an attack. Leo snapped out of it when Amelia's face whipped toward Mikey, now Pennywise's once again as he was tackled.

"Get off of him!" Leo shouted, charging at his side. He gasped when he was shoved back, quickly getting on his feet. Mikey whimpered, his hands just barely holding the psychotic clown's snapping jaws back from shredding him to bits.

"Donnie, take the kid home. Leo and Mikey are going to get themselves killed." Raph said, about to run back.

"Wait- Raph, this isn't part of the plan!" Donnie exclaimed.

"Fuck the plan, I'm not going to run like a coward while this shithead murders Leo and Mikey! Do you want them to make it out of this alive, or not?!" Raphael exclaimed.

Donnie furrowed his brows deeply, tightening his lips as he nodded. "Fine. I'll let you guys know when I've gotten Caleb to safety."

Raph nodded back before sprinting toward where his brothers were. He emitted a loud cry, flipping through the air as he unsheathed his daggers. He landed on Pennywise's shoulders, stabbing him repeatedly before he was shoved off. He jumped to his feet, Pennywise about to go for Mikey.

"Hey! Focus on me!" Raph shouted, charging to grab Pennywise and hurl it behind him, the clown smacking hard into a tree. Leo and Mikey went to stand on either side of him, Leo shooting Raph a look.

"I told you that none of us were supposed to be alone!" Leo exclaimed.

"And I told you that I'm not letting anything happen to you." Raph said, his whole body tense as Pennywise cracked his body back into place, swaying for a moment before standing upright.

"Well, well, well... who's big and tough now, hm? I was beginning to think that your hide was too thick for my taste, big boy." Pennywise said to Raph as he clenched his teeth, glaring angrily. "But it looks like someone's starting to get nice and soft."

"Hey! Raph is NOT soft! I would know, he's almost as scary as you when he gets mad!" Mikey shouted.

"Enough!" Leo exclaimed, unsheathing his swords before running towards the clown. Pennywise only grinned slowly, evading Leo as he jumped into the tree above him.

"Don't let him get away!" Raph shouted.

"Raph! RAPH!" Leo grabbed him, Raph tearing his shoulder away.

"That thing dies tonight." He growled.

"Listen to me for one second! You left Donnie to fend for himself and now Pennywise is on the move. If it reaches Donnie and Caleb and we aren't there to defend them, what do you think is going to happen?!" Leo exclaimed, Raph's face falling as realization came over him. "Mikey, get on your communicator and get Donnie's location. We're moving out." Leo said, striding quickly back from where they entered the park.

Well, that was pretty intense! So, will Donnie have a run in with Pennywise before he can bring Caleb to safety? What does the murderous clown have in store next? Find out this and more in the next update! In the meantime, thank you for reading, and see you next time!

14. A Case of Deja Vu

Good afternoon, readers! Happy New Year to you, and I hope you all had a wonderful Christmas/Chanukah season! I do apologize for the lack of updates on this- I was a bit swamped with a few other projects I was working on. Now that some are out of the way/close to completion, I am going to place some of my focus back on this fanfiction- and just in time for the IT 2017 DVD release too! So, if you have been anticipating this for a while, the wait is finally over!

As they made their way out of Central Park, Donnie hushed a terrified Caleb, looking up at the sign of a building. "This is it." He gently set the boy down, crouching down to his level. "Listen carefully to me, okay, Caleb? You're going to go in here. These people are going to help you and take care of you." He said as Caleb looked up, seeing the word "Orphanage." He then looked back up at Donnie.

"Y- You look like a monster... but you helped me. Why?" Caleb asked, Donnie's expression softening.

"Because sometimes, people are different than how they look. Someone who isn't a monster may look like one... and someone who is... may not seem that way at first." Donnie explained to the boy. To his shock, after several moments passed, he inhaled sharply as the boy hugged him.

"The scary clown took my mommy away. Do you think my daddy will ever find me?" Caleb asked.

"I'm sure he will, Caleb." Donnie said as he hugged him back. "Go on now. It's not safe out here."

Caleb nodded, beginning to go up the steps. He stopped, looking back. "Mister... what's your name?"

"Uh... it's Donnie." He replied, clearing his throat.

"... I want to save people like you when I grow up, Donnie." He said

before continuing up the stairs, knocking on the door. Donnie was in shock for a moment, snapping out of it when the door finally opened. He ducked down, keeping out of the light which poured through the door. A woman gasped upon seeing Caleb, scooping him up and taking him inside. When Donnie heard the door shut and lock again, he exhaled a sigh of relief, his heart feeling warm.

It was in this moment he understood why Leo was so hell bent on doing this. The life a child was precious, and he had just delivered him to safety.

Just then, he felt his communicator vibrate, taking it out as he got to his feet. "Mikey? Where are you? Are you and Leo alright?"

"Yeah, Raph came and tried to help kick Pennywise's butt, um... but he got away. Leo wanted me to make sure it didn't come after you." Mikey said.

"Well, I hope not! At any rate, tell him that Caleb is in good hands now. I'll start making my way back and keep an eye out for anything unpleasant." Donnie replied.

"Alright, see you later, alligator!" Mikey piped, Donnie rolling his eyes playfully as he pocketed his communicator.

Meanwhile, back in the lair, Splinter attempted to meditate in order to keep his nerves in check. Casey watched as April paced anxiously, biting on her knuckle.

"You know Red, I think you're starting to make an indent in the floor." Casey said, to which she shot him a look.

"I'm glad that this is amusing to you, Casey." She snapped.

"Look. Take a deep breath. They're going to be fine, okay? Just... sit down, try to relax." Casey replied.

"I can't relax... I'm worried sick." She sighed.

"Hey. Do you see Mr. Miagi over there? Those are his sons- well, kind of, but you know what I mean- and he's being all chill. If he can manage it, so can you." Casey said. "No one's saying you shouldn't be

worried. Hell, I'm worried too. Just... try and think the best, maybe."

April blinked. She never would have expected this from him. "Thank you, Casey. I... guess you're right." She said before lowering herself to sit on the couch beside him. Just then, she felt her phone vibrate, digging into her pocket and taking it out. When she looked at it, she sighed with relief. "Oh... they're okay. Donnie just messaged and said that they're heading back, and to meet them outside."

Casey glanced over. "Wait, why do they want you to meet them outside?"

"Donnie's going to take me home. He said that Pennywise escaped after they got Caleb. They don't want to take any risks." April said, Casey rolling his eyes.

"Of course he would use that as an excuse..." Casey muttered under his breath. As they spoke, Splinter had opened his eyes, flickering his ears as he too sighed with relief.

A short time later, April headed up, looking over when she heard footsteps. "Donnie... thank God you're okay."

"Yeah..." He said as he approached. "Come on, let's get you home. You shouldn't be out for too long."

"Okay..." April said, looking around. "Where are the others?"

"They're on their way. I wanted to take care of you, first." He replied.

"Okay... I'll catch up with them tomorrow then. I'm so glad you guys were able to save Caleb." She said as the pair began to head down the street. She looked up when she felt him hug an arm around her shoulders. "Donnie?"

"April... it's very important that I keep you close. I don't want anything happening to you." He said to her, to which she smiled a bit.

"Nothing's going to happen, Donnie. You don't have to worry." She said as they continued along. He took them along a shortcut through several alleyways, and she blinked when he stopped suddenly.

"Donnie? What is it? Is something wrong?"

"April... there's something that I... wanted to say." He said, turning to look at her.

Meanwhile, Casey glanced at his phone, rolling his eyes as he ran a hand through his hair. He then felt his turtle communicator vibrate, taking it out to answer. "Well, it's about time..."

"Sorry... we're making our way back now." Leo said on the other end. "Are you guys okay there?"

"Yeah... April got Donnie's text, she's waiting by the manhole to be 'escorted' home." Casey rolled his eyes.

Leo closed his eyes for a moment, glancing over to the side flatly. "Really?"

"Uh... why are you looking at me like that?" Raph and Mikey stepped out of the way as Donnie posed the question, Raph giving Leo a nod.

"He checks out." Raph said. "This is definitely our weirdo braniac."

"Donnie, this is no time to be thinking about romance." Leo snapped at him.

"What are you talking about?" Donnie asked.

"Casey knows about the text you sent April. Do you have any idea how dangerous it is to have her stand on the surface by herself?" Leo lectured.

"What?! Who told her to do that?!" Donnie nearly choked.

As Casey listened to this, a chill trickled down his spine. "Leo. Leo!"

"What is it, Casey?" Leo responded.

"Put Donnie on. Now!" He jumped to his feet, grabbing his jacket as he sped toward the tunnels.

Leo frowned, handing the communicator to Donnie. "Uh, Casey?"

What's going-"

"Did you text April asking her to meet you by the manhole? Yes or no, Donnie, this is serious." Casey demanded.

"No... Casey, I don't understand- Casey?" Donnie's heart skipped a beat when he heard a click, looking up.

"Donnie, what's going on?" Leo asked.

"We have to get back to the lair. Now." Donnie said barely above a whisper before sprinting ahead.

"Donnie. Donnie!" Leo shouted after him, the other siblings exchanging an uneasy glance before running to catch up.

Meanwhile, April blinked in surprise. "Donnie... look... I know we've already talked about your- your feelings, and all of this that's going on probably isn't helping... but is this really the best time to be-"

"I don't know what's going to happen tomorrow, April." He said, gently taking her shoulders. "I could lose you at any moment. If we... leave things unsaid, undone... we both have to live with that forever."

April bit her lip, looking down. "Donnie... I have been... thinking about it. A little. I mean... I don't know what 'we' would be like... I'm just... I don't want to hurt you. If we tried something and it didn't work out... I would hate myself if I broke your heart."

"There's no way that could ever happen, April." He moved closer to her, and April felt her back make contact with the brick wall of the building as he leaned one of his large hands against it. It was difficult to see him in the low light, one side of his face being silhouetted. "So... we have nothing to lose from at least trying it out by that logic... right?"

"I... I don't know, Donnie. This isn't... very good timing." April stopped, inhaling sharply when she went to separate from the wall, only to feel his other hand apply light pressure against her shoulder, keeping her in place. His face lowered, his cheek brushing against hers to whisper into her ear.

"Are you scared, April?" He spoke lowly. When she glanced at him, drawing her head back, he licked his lips.

Splinter looked up when he heard footsteps, getting to his feet as he made his way toward the sound. "My sons, thank goodness you are alright." He said as they approached.

"Dad, where are April and Casey?" Leo asked, tense.

"Why, April left some time ago to meet with you, did she not? And Casey left suddenly only a few minutes ago." Splinter answered.

"Oh my God..." Donnie breathed, turning without hesitation to run out of the lair.

"Donnie, wait!" Mikey exclaimed, going after him.

"Leonardo, what is it, what's happened?" Splinter asked with worry.

"I don't know, but I think April's been tricked. We need to find her as soon as possible." Leo turned, looking at Raph. "Stay here."

In response, he threw his arms up. "Leo, what if-"

"Do as I tell you, Raphael!" Leo shouted, staring at him angrily before heading out of the lair. Raph hissed a sigh, shaking his head as he stared at the floor.

Casey narrowed his eyes, striding briskly down the street. "Come on, Red... where the hell are you...?" He said lowly to himself, drawing his sweatshirt hoodie over his head. He knew there had been something suspicious about the text April had received, and he cursed himself for not being a man and staying with her on the surface until he was sure she was safe. He felt something vibrate then, taking out his communicator.

"You better be the real thing, or I'm going to beat the ever loving-"

"Casey, it's me. No fakes." Leo cut him off. "Where is April?"

"Not with either of us, that's the problem. Can't Inspector Gadget track her down or something with one of his gizmos?" Casey asked.

"He said there's some sort of signal block coming from April's end, so he can't pinpoint her location on his GPS unit." Leo replied.

"Of course. Things always go wrong when we NEED them to work." Casey stopped then, narrowing his eyes. "Hang on. Leo, I'll get back to you. I thought I heard something from an alleyway up ahead." Casey ended the call, shoving the device in his pocket as he proceeded with an air of caution.

Meanwhile, April bit her lip. "Donnie... I don't think this is a good idea. We need to take a step back here, and-"

"But you can't take a step back, can you, April?" Donnie chuckled. "Why the hesitation, April? I was under the impression that you weren't afraid of anything."

"It's not about being afraid, Donnie, it's about the fact that you're-what has gotten into you?!" April grunted as she tried to push him back while he continued to chuckle lowly.

"Funny. That's actually what I was just thinking about you." Donnie smirked darkly then, looking her up and down. Realization made April's expression change, furrowing her brows.

"Donnie, I need to go. Donnie- let me go-" April shoved her weight against him, but he would not budge. She dug into her purse as he laughed, clenching her teeth as she tazed him. He emitted a painful hiss, April moving away from him as he collected himself. When he slowly looked at her, his eyes reflected an amber color in the low light. "I knew it." She narrowed her eyes. "Donnie would never do something like this. Tell me where they are." Silence passed between them, and she inhaled sharply. "Tell me what you did to my friends!"

"... I don't understand what you mean, April. Come here. I promised I would always keep you close."

"Stay away from me. You're not Donnie." April took a step back.

"Of course I am. Come on... stop playing so hard to get."

April eyed the way out of the alley, about to break into a run. However, she felt herself being seized, the breath knocked out of her

lungs as she was shoved against the side of the building. She winced when she felt an abnormally long tongue slobber the side of her face, Donnie chuckling lowly as what she knew to be his normally chivalrous demeanor deteriorating into something more vile. Of course, she knew however, this was not Donnie. This was the creature wearing his appearance like a mask.

"They'll find me, you know. They'll find me and-"

"And they'll weep when all the good parts of you are all gobbled up already!" It laughed mockingly.

Just then, the sound of a gun going off was heard, followed by the sound of a pained shriek.

April inhaled sharply as the pressure against her back was lifted, stumbling a bit as she tried to regain her footing. She then realized that Casey was standing at the entrance of the alleyway, holding a handgun.

"Red, come on!" He shouted. "Stay low!"

April began to make her way to him, but as she did, eyes the color of blood emerged from the shadows, grabbing her ankles and dragging her back into the darkness.

"April!" Casey shouted.

Meanwhile, Leo, Donnie and Mikey began to hurry their pace. "Casey's weapon activation sensor was triggered, he may have found them!"

"Come on, no time to waste!" Leo replied, the trio heading towards where Casey was located.

She emerged, running to Casey as he ushered her behind him. He shot the handgun several times into the darkness, backing away slowly. When he heard a cry of pain, he stopped, his eyes widening. "Oh shit..." He said as someone stumbled into the light. "A- April?!"

"N- No, Casey!" She said from behind him, turning him around as April whimpered, her shoulder bleeding. "That's the thing. You have

to kill it."

"C- Casey... please..." April whimpered. "It's going to kill both of us if you don't-"

"Casey. Finish this." She hissed in his ear. "We have to get back to the others."

Casey lowered the handgun, glancing over his shoulder. "April... don't you know?"

Leo, Donnie and Mikey turned the corner, just down the street from where the others were.

"Come on, come on! Stay with me April, come on!" Donnie exclaimed.

"Know what, Casey?" She asked.

"... They're dead." Casey said to her, to which she furrowed her brow.

"Wh- What? What the hell are you talking about? No! They can't be!" She exclaimed, her eyes welling up with tears. Meanwhile, he glanced at the other April, who was holding her wounded shoulder as she simply stared at him silently.

"Just kill it already! It's going to kill us both too if you don't!" She exclaimed. As Casey took out his handgun, he took the safety off as the trip of turtles were within eyesight.

"Fine by me." Casey said as he turned, pointing the gun at the bleeding April. The turtles stopped upon seeing the scene, their tension spiking.

"Oh, not this confusing thing..." Mikey groaned. "They ALWAYS kill the wrong one!"

"Not this time." Casey said before elbowing the April behind him, making her tumble back before whirling around, firing at her several times. Donnie emitted a girly scream as she fell to the ground, gasping wheezily. "Stay back." Casey said to the other turtles as the bleeding April made her way over, staring down darkly at the April he had shot. As she tried to crawl over to them, April wrenched the

gun out of Casey's hand, emptying the cartridge in a barrage of bullets. Once the downed April stilled, they all gasped as she slowly reverted back to Pennywise.

"How did you know?" April breathed as Donnie sped over to her, applying pressure to the wound on her shoulder.

"I know I got a few hits on that thing. The fact that she didn't look roughed up at all, too perfect..." He said. "Also, it tried too hard to act like you. I don't know how, but I somehow just... knew."

April blinked. "Wow, Casey... nice thinking on your toes."

"Uh, you guys..." Mikey whimpered.

"Well, thankfully you're alright. We were worried sick." Leo said. "We need to make a new plan. Go back to the drawing board, see if there's any way we can make sure this threat can be averted for good."

"The first thing we're doing is getting April some medical assistance! Casey, how could you do this to her?!" Donnie exclaimed, motioning to her as she held her shoulder.

"Listen, they switched or something and I couldn't see! That thing was probably counting on me shooting and killing April and then feasting on me!" Casey replied.

"Guys..." Mikey whined.

"So that means you should be mister trigger happy?! You could have blown her head clean off!" Donnie's voice cracked. "You can't just be shooting everywhere unless you're sure!"

"Thanks for the advice, boy genius! I thought I was shooting at the creature!"

"That would have been a wonderful excuse." Donnie's voice lowered.

"Will you both knock it off?! I'm trying to concentrate on messaging Raph, so stop making a scene." Leo snapped.

"Oh, don't act like you're such a martyr, this whole thing happened

because she thought she was with YOU. It knows you have some lovesick crush on her and was trying to act all cute." Casey continued to bicker with Donnie.

"Casey, that is not his fault, just like this isn't yours. Both of you just drop this, please..." April sighed, closing her eyes.

"Hello, Earth to everyone!" Mikey cried.

"WHAT?!" The other two turtles and Casey exclaimed.

"The other April is gone!" Mikey pointed to a now lone pool of blood on the ground.

The others looked back, and upon realizing that Mikey's words were true, they began to scan the area.

"Keep vigilant!" Leo exclaimed. "Come on, we've got to get April back to the lair to patch her up. We move together."

The group finally reached the lair, Raph looking up when they entered. He sighed lightly when he saw they had April with them, Splinter going over to make sure they were alright.

"So. Let's review the outcome of tonight's mission. Yes, we managed to get Caleb back and return him to safety. However, we nearly lost several people tonight." He glanced over at Raph, who curled his lip.

"Stop staring at me and just say what you want to say." Raph spat.

"I made something very clear at the beginning of all this. No one goes alone. You broke that very rule that could have gotten us killed." Leo said.

"We're all here, aren't we?!" Raph exclaimed.

"By the skin of our teeth and a pinch of luck." Leo said. "Donnie and Caleb could have been attacked with no one to help defend them, April was practically abducted and nearly killed, Casey was almost-"

"And both you and Mikey would have met your maker if I hadn't gone back. So who's life is worth more, Leo? Yours? Mine? You think

it's going to be any easier to hunt this thing down if it takes a couple of us first?" Raph rose a brow arrogantly. "You think that just because you come up with some flowery plan that everything is going to go the way you want? The world isn't like that, Leo. I'm not just going to stand around and let things go to shit."

"Neither am I Raph, but we can't just charge in head first without taking precaution! There is a reason why I say the things I say!" Leo exclaimed.

"Oh, besides the fact you like hearing your own voice?" Raph sneered, to which the others either groaned or shook their heads.

"I'm glad that this is all a game to you. Maybe when something serious really does happen to one of us, you'll appreciate my commitment to strategy a bit more." Leo said before shoving past his brother. "Casey, you can walk April home."

"Um, Leo, maybe just for good measure, I can-"

"Donnie, put a can in it and let it go." Leo snapped, Donnie clearing his throat and looking down before turning to shuffle out of the room.

As Leo plopped down, rubbing his temples, he glanced over when Splinter sat beside him. "Leonardo." He spoke quietly, to which Leo leaned his head back, sighing.

"Dad... I don't understand. I don't know how we're going to get this thing. Yeah, we saved Caleb, which I'm very relieved about. But if we can't control this creature and it continues to hunt people down, what good is it? We have to eliminate the enemy, that's the only way we're going to save this city."

"You are right about all of these things, my son. As I have already told you, not all enemies can be defeated in the same way. A warrior must learn that the blade is not the only weapon at their disposal. The true weapon comes from within. This weapon can be used for good, or for evil. It is for this reason it can exist in many forms. This creature uses lies and deception as a means to destroy others. How can you counter this? With truth, and clarity." Splinter said, Leo

looking at the ground with his brows furrowed.

April sighed, rubbing her forehead as Casey walked beside her. "What a night..."

"Tell me about it. I really am sorry that I shot you." Casey replied.

"I'll be fine, thankfully the bullet only grazed me." She said.

"About what happened back there, though... when you thought that was Donnie... how did he- it-... I mean, were you... convinced?" Casey asked.

"For a second there, I was... it was like he knew Donnie inside out, right down to every detail of his appearance... until he tried to make an advance on me, that is." She shook her head. "Donnie would never treat me that way, no matter how much he likes me."

Casey rose a brow. "So... he really does like you, huh? Not just a high school crush sort of thing."

"It's not easy, Casey. At the end of the day, Donnie is still one of my best friends. I've saved him... he's saved me... they're the only family I have. I don't want to hurt him." April frowned lightly. "And while all this chaos is happening, I can't even consider the thought deeply enough anyway."

"Don't have to put that much thought into it, Red. You either want to try something and see how it goes, or let it go." Casey shrugged, the pair stopping as they exchanged a glance. "You've got nothing to lose. If he really cares... he'll understand."

"Casey, with everything going on, the last thing I need is to think about hooking up with someone." April said flatly.

"Isn't that the best time to think about it? When everything is falling apart? When you need someone to keep you together?" April stopped at this to look at him.

"What are you saying, exactly?" She asked.

"I'm saying that I need to get this thought out of my head. The

thought that I could have killed you tonight. Because you are one of the few people that keep me together."

April's expression softened. "Casey... it was an accident."

"Well, I'd rather think about a nicer accident, then." He said before gently taking April's shoulders, drawing her towards him as he closed the space between them. After a few moments, the kiss was broken, April staring at him in silent shock. Her cheeks were flushed, her mind reeling from the pleasant sensation. "See? Now we can both have nice dreams tonight." He smirked lightly, placing an arm around her shoulders.

"It would be nice if I even knew what to say at the moment." April breathed.

"Come on, Red, you know you liked it." Casey joked.

"I'm not debating that, I just think my mind went blank." April replied.

"That's how you know it was good." He chuckled, the pair continuing along their way. As they did, someone emerged from the shadows, watching them.

Donnie could feel his heart sinking. What began as sneaking out to make sure Casey had gotten April home safely had quickly changed into heartbreak. What was he thinking? Did he think he actually had a chance to claim April's heart?

Did he think he actually had a chance to be loved in the sense he longed for?

He retreated into the darkness, quickly and silently, shaking his head as he made his way back underground. Casey eventually walked April up to her stoop, bidding her goodnight before heading for his own apartment. They all took that night to reflect and recover from the events of that day, their sleep transitioning them into a morning filled with uncertainty.

Alright, another chapter with a nice dose of action! I will

hopefully update much sooner going forward, so please let me know what you thought in the meantime! I thank you all for your support over the course of our hiatus, it is greatly appreciated! Keep an eye out for upcoming chapters, and I will see you next time!

15. I Need A Doctor

Good afternoon, readers! I have returned with a new chapter! Some really good progress has been made with this fanfiction, so I'm confident that you should be getting updates on a more frequent basis. So, are you ready? Thank you again for your patience, and enjoy!

The next morning, April awoke, running a hand through her messy hair. She did a double take when she saw she had a pending message on her phone, tilting her head when she saw that it was from someone who she didn't recognize. She dialed the number, rubbing her eyes as the phone rang. She finally heard someone pick up. "Hello?"

"Yes, who is this?" A man's voice was heard on the other end of the line.

"Uh... my name is April O'Neil. Channel Six news? You called my personal phone." She said, swearing under her breath when she dropped something on the floor, bending over to pick it up.

"I did intend to call you, April. There is something very important I need to discuss with you. It concerns the... problem in your city."

April sat up, shaking her head "What are you- who are you?"

"I can't speak for much longer. It could be listening. I'm going to send you an address to meet me. I suggest you memorize it and delete it as soon as possible. If you truly wish to save everyone, including yourself, you will listen to what I have to say."

"Excuse me, I am not meeting up with a complete stranger until you at least-" April frowned when there was a click, drawing back to look at her phone in confusion. She bit her lip, receiving a text about a moment later with an address to meet this stranger.

Down in the lair, Donnie drew back when April described the odd call to the group. "Absolutely not." He said outright. "This sounds far

too shady."

"For once, I agree with him." Casey said, April having called him to the lair as well.

"Is there any way we can play back the call?" Leo asked.

"I think so... Donnie?" April handed him her phone, watching as he took it over to his computer to connect it to a wire, typing away at his computer. Moments later, they were able to play the call back.

"So you have no idea who this is, April?" Leo asked.

"Not a clue." She shook her head.

"Well, maybe we should go on a group date and meet this guy. Like hell is April going to this place by herself." Raph said. "Besides, he didn't say to come alone. And even if he did, it's not happening."

"But what if it's the scary clown trying to trick us again?" Mikey asked.

"Possible, but not likely. No reason for him to go to these lengths. But still, the fact that this guy asked for April to see him is still suspicious. I'm trying to use my voice decoder to identify the caller." Donnie said. After a few moments, he pursed his lip. "Of course... he's on some kind of protection program. All his information is redacted."

"Alright then. April, you and Casey go together to meet mister anonymous. If they really know something about this thing, we'll take it from there." Leo said.

"Okay." April replied. "We only have about ten minutes." She said to Casey, the pair taking their leave.

As they did, Donnie sighed, remembering what he had witnessed the night before. His fingers continued to type away, hoping to scrounge up some information on the anonymous caller.

On the surface, Casey glanced over, raising a brow as April tried to discretely smell her shirt. "Uh, what the hell are you doing?" He snickered.

"Well, I don't want to see some stranger and smell like a sewer." She replied.

"So, instead of worrying that this guy might be some serial killer or something, you're worried about how you smell? Talk about priorities, Red." Casey laughed.

"Look. Nothing can be worse than that thing that's hunting us. If there's anything this guy can tell us that will help, I'll take it." April said, the pair turning the corner. "This is the place." She glanced over. "It's a bar. Great."

"What, is he trying to take you on a hot date or something?" Casey rose a brow. "Are you sure you're not on some match-up website or something?"

"Ms. O'Neil." A man said suddenly, approaching them. "Thank you for coming." He smiled lightly.

"This is the place, right? 225 E 44th St.?" She said.

"You're correct. I see you brought a friend. He's more than welcome. Come, let's go inside and have some lunch." He said, the pair exchanging a wary glance as they headed inside the bar. Once inside, a greeter smiled.

"Hello, welcome to Overlook. Table for three?" She smiled.

"Yes please, thank you." The man said, the trio getting a booth situated in the back. As they looked over the menu, the man spoke quietly. "Thank you both for meeting with me. There's a lot I need to discuss with you, and the only thing I ask is that you keep an open mind."

Casey sighed. "Okay, look. We're not here to talk about some hippie shit or whatever. What do you know about the monster and how do we kill it?"

"I understand you want to cut right to the chase. I don't blame you. But eliminating this creature is not a simple task. In fact, only a select few have the capacity to even make an attempt." He said.

"What do you mean?" April asked. "Look, we've tried everything. We've shot it, we've stabbed it, we've-

"You haven't tried everything, April." The man said. "You've tried physical methods of killing it. But this creature is not a physical being. It presents itself in a physical manner to deceive and consume its next victim, but it consumes more than just the flesh. That's only like the fatty part of a steak. The real nutrition, the meat of its victims, is not flesh, not muscle, not bones or organs. It's the mind, and soul."

"Wait, like a zombie?" Casey rose his brows.

"No. Not the physical brain. The mind, Casey." He replied.

At this, he drew back. "Hang on a second." He shook his head. "I didn't tell you my name. How the hell do you know my name?"

"I know many things about you, about both of you. I don't say this as a threat, simply as a fact. I didn't have to research any article or record either. I too have been aware of Pennywise's presence. I was hoping to reach out to people like myself, and I can see it in the two of you." The man said.

"How are we like you? In what way?" April shook her head in confusion.

"I will explain everything. But you must know how the creature works in order for you to understand how to kill it. Nothing truly exists without a soul. Otherwise, it's just a husk. An empty shell. Think of a turtle." He said. "The shell is nothing without the turtle. However, the turtle can't sustain itself without the shell. The shell is the physical layer which contains it. They are directly connected to one another. Pennywise induces fear in its victims, because fear is the most crippling emotion anyone can feel. It has a direct effect on our other emotions, our state of mind, our actions. Fear drives us to madness, it deteriorates us. This is why Pennywise pursues children more than anyone. They are the easiest to induce fear. Doing so establishes a loss of control in its victims... and a loss of control, is a loss of power. Power that it absorbs."

"You still didn't tell me how you know my name." Casey said flatly, April giving him a look.

"Okay, I think I get it, but... how do you kill something like that? And why do you think that we can do this?" April asked.

"When I was a young boy... I began to see things, things that I knew even at that age was not supposed to be there, but was. I began to hear a voice speaking to me, guiding me like a parent would a child. But no one could see or hear him."

"Uh, imaginary friend much?" Casey asked, and April elbowed him.

"I know this sounds very unusual. It was for me, too... until I went to a place that changed my life completely. There was a man there who explained that not everyone could see the things I saw, could speak without uttering a single word. He gave a name to my ability. It was because of what he taught me, that I was able to save both myself and my mother from the horrors we both faced." The man took out an old news article, April pursing glancing at him curiously before reading it.

"Oh my God..." She breathed, Casey looking at the man warily before craning his head to peek at the article. "What happened to you is... awful."

"My father was not a perfect man. He had many flaws... it was those flaws, those fears, that made him susceptible. But there is a greater reason why the evil presence in that place drove him to try to kill my mother and I, April." The man said. "It was because of my ability. Not long after I barely escaped with my life, I had a vision, April. In that vision, I sensed a very powerful entity. I had to stop the vision, I had to protect myself. Again, even being as young as I was, I knew that it was necessary. Do you know what it is I saw? It was a group of adults, a group which had banded together as children to face a very powerful creature."

"Pennywise." April said.

"Yes. They may never have known it, but they had the same ability as me. Unfortunately... they were unable to destroy the creature

completely. He fed upon one who was left behind. That alone was able to sustain it and prevent its death. April... you and Casey have this special gift as well. It lies dormant within you, but you have it. I can sense it. You must awaken it, learn to use it, and then avoid making the same mistake those people from Derry made twenty-seven years ago."

"Are you serious? April, this is bullshit." Casey said. He was about to get up when the man looked at him, Casey stopping and looking over at him. As he did, his eyes widened.

April sighed lightly. "Casey, come on. Just sit down and-"

"I hear his voice. I hear your voice in my head." Casey pointed at him. "How in the hell are you-"

"You can hear my voice because you can shine, Casey." The man said.

"Wait, shine, what is- what does shine mean?" April asked.

"Shining is a power that comes from your mind. You see, everything around us has some effect on our mind. Some say that the key to a person is their heart. I don't believe that. The heart is a vital physical organ, but that's all it is. The mind isn't necessarily physical. The brain is, yes, but there's more to it than that. It's a receptor of energy. When something terrible happens to us at a young age, the mind goes into fortress mode. The mind is always seeking new ways to protect itself from harm. That is where shining comes from. It's like a beacon of light to disperse the darkness, the bad thoughts. It empowers us to conquer what comes after experiencing something so terrible while the mind is still growing."

"Wait, so... how is it that people can't just like... talk with their minds? Why isn't everyone doing this?" Casey asked.

"Because everyone isn't doing it. In fact, many people are not capable of doing it. Most of society doesn't even know that shining exists." He replied.

"Wait, so... you're saying that Casey has this... power? How can he have some power that he doesn't even know that he has?" April

asked.

"Because it is dormant. Yours is too, April. But I know it's there, I can see it. This is why I sought you both out. It's a risk for all three of us... after all, it could be watching. But I had to tell you this. If I can sense this power, so can Pennywise. It is those who can shine who pose the greatest threat to it. It is for this reason that the ghosts drove my father mad, why they whispered to him to end my life. I was a threat. So were the children who stood against him in Derry over fifty years ago, and a second time twenty seven years ago. Now, the danger rests on your shoulders. Pennywise is more cunning than you expect. He will do anything to ensure both you and Casey perish so that he may endure. Your turtle friends may not be able to destroy the creature themselves, but they can help to protect the two who can."

"So if you know about all this stuff, then why don't you just kill him yourself then? Why leave it up to us? We don't know anything about... 'shining.' Wouldn't it be better if you do it?" Casey asked.

"It does make more sense. However... I have traveled a long, rough road over the last couple decades. Though I've regained control of my shine, I still have a lot of work to do before I can truly leave the darkness behind. If I were to face the creature now... I am not confident I would be the victor. And if it were to consume me, it would only become more dangerous." He replied.

"So you're going to leave it to a pair of rookies who have no idea what the hell to even do? What, you think we're going to just think really hard and THAT'S going to kill this thing? This isn't a game, pal." Casey spat.

"Casey." April shot him a look, sighing. "Okay. So say this is the only way to defeat him. Neither of us had any idea that we... possessed this kind of power, let alone use it."

"That is precisely why I intend to help you awaken that power, April, and teach you to use it. The time will come when you will need to face Pennywise and break him down. Your light must overcome its darkness; it's potent, from the deepest recesses of space." He said.

As Casey shook his head, April bit her lip. "Look... I'm not sure about this, but... we don't have any other options at this point."

"Unfortunately, April, you're right. You don't." The man replied. He had finished his meal, placing down his utensils. "And we are unfortunately out of time. I cannot stay here in the city. If I do, it will find me. Although I will always be moving, I will never be far away. The connection between us has been made April, Casey. I don't need to be sitting in front of you, or speaking with you on the phone, in order to communicate. I will help you as much as I can."

"Great." Casey said, taking out a twenty dollar bill to throw on the table. "If you don't mind, I have better things to do." He got up, April huffing as he was about to walk out. As he did, the man turned, speaking in a gentle tone.

"Casey." He called quietly. "I know you have a difficult time believing in things, in people. Everyone you had believed in has let you down with the exception of April. I-"

"Hey, don't think you know me because you can do all that mind shit." Casey pointed a finger at him.

"Okay." The man replied. "I do want to tell you one thing." He continued. "Your father has never left you. He is proud of who you have become."

Casey scoffed. "Please, if you're going to give me that typical inspirational bullshit-"

"He's sorry... for ever doubting you, for thinking you were weak. He said you will always be on his team, and that you are a true Jones." The man said.

Casey fell silent, his expression softening into something between shock and somberness. He glanced to the side, April furrowing her brows as he felt a lump forming in his throat, nodding slowly. "He told me to never give in to the bad guys."

"Yes. Casey, don't make the same mistake as me. I allowed my traumatic experiences to define me, to rule my life. Don't go down

that path." He turned to look at April. "And I say the same to you. It takes a great amount of power to overcome events that you have both experienced. That's why those who do, shine." He rose from his seat then, leaving money for the bill and taking out a card. "You will hear from me again, April, Casey. You both have a long road ahead."

As he turned to leave, April stared after him, Casey still in a bit of shock from what he said. When she looked down at his card, it had no number, no information, only two words; "Doctor Sleep..." She said to herself, flipping over the card to see it was blank there as well. She finished paying the bill, the pair leaving the eatery in silence.

Alright! So, some Stephen King fans may know who this mysterious man is, and what he has referred to. So, where will this story go next? You'll have to wait to find out in the next update! In the meantime, please share your thoughts in a review! Thank you again for reading, and I'll see you next time!

16. Familiarity Breeds Contempt

Good afternoon, everyone! I am back with a new update! I haven't been updating as much due to some other projects I've been working on as well as my inconsistent work schedule, but this story has been all but forgotten! Thank you to everyone who's been offering their kind words and reviews. I hope you enjoy this next chapter!

Within the lair, Leo rose a hairless brow, glancing between April and Casey once they told him of their encounter. "This... seems a bit far fetched, don't you think?"

"I think 'Doctor Sleep' used some kind of hypnosis or something on them, because that's the stupidest thing I've heard in my life." Raph said, crossing his arms.

"Look, Raph, I'm not kidding. I heard that guy's voice INSIDE my head." Casey said, looking up at him.

"Maybe he slipped some drugs in your drink, then." Raph shrugged.

"Sometimes I hear voices in my head..." Mikey said, the group all turning to look at him silently. "They help me decide what kind of ice cream I want to have when I'm craving a snack." The group groaned lightly, some rolling their eyes.

Donnie thought for a moment. "Well, telepathy is often considered to be nothing more than pseudoscience, but it's possible that if our own thoughts can be a result of small electro-chemical signals between our sensory receptors and our brain, then it could be possible that a select few may have the ability to transfer electro-chemical signals to a receptor located outside of our physical selves- that is, to another individual, or even perhaps."

"English, Donnie." Leo held up a hand, cutting his brother off.

Donnie sighed, rolling his eyes after glancing at Leo flatly. "Look, it's not that difficult to understand."

"Okay, Donnie? We don't have a PhD in Geekology like you do." Casey shrugged smugly, Donnie gritting his teeth as he shook his head.

"What I'm trying to say, is..." Donnie said through clenched teeth. "...that this 'Doctor Sleep' may have a point. For people like April and Casey, who suffered a traumatic experience at a young age, their brains are forced to then shift gears and undergo a different route of development. This alternate route may cause enhancements that someone who didn't experience something greatly traumatic may not acquire."

"So you're saying their brains mutated?! Dude, that means they're like us!" Mikey beamed.

"I'm not saying that, Mikey. Mutations are caused by a man-made chemical component or radiation, causing rapid cell reproduction and-"

"Donnie." Leo cut him off, signaling for him to not get off track.

"Anyhow." Donnie cleared his throat. "If this so-called doctor's claims are true, then it should be easy enough to either prove or disprove. He can give April or Casey some kind of test pertaining to the development of such enhancements, and I would be able to observe their brain activity while doing so. I'm no brain surgeon, but I can look at readings and understand them easily enough."

"Sounds like a good idea, Donnie." Raph smirked. "Then you'd be able to see what's inside April's head. You can see if she has the same fantasies you do."

"Raphael!" Donnie shouted, tightening his lips as he adjusted his glasses. "That is neither warranted, nor appropriate at this time!"

"That would be pretty funny though..." Mikey snickered. "Everyone can hear you mumbling in your sleep, Donnie." He chuckled.

Donnie had reached his limit at that point, exhaling sharply as he turned to head out of the area. Leo pinched the bridge of his nose. April glanced over as Casey couldn't help but snicker, and she was

not amused. She got up, making her way across the room to follow where Donnie had gone.

"I'm glad you're both taking this seriously." Leo said, glancing at his two brothers as he headed over to Casey. "Can you just pick up where April left off, please?"

"Not really much else to say... he said he'd keep in touch after he..." His voice faded.

"After he what, Casey?" Leo asked.

Meanwhile, April stopped when she saw Donnie typing away furiously at his computer, his back to her. "Mikey, Raph, if you're fooling around back there and trying to bother me, I'm going to electrocute you."

"Hey, relax... it's just me." April said, Donnie halting his typing to glance at her for a moment before resuming what he was doing.

"I'm sorry, April. That wasn't meant for you." He said.

"Well, unless my name is suddenly Raphael or Mikey, I didn't think it was." She chuckled lightly, approaching his chair. "Listen. You don't have to feel embarrassed. I know they're just teasing."

Donnie sighed, still looking at his computer screen as his hands ceased typing. "April... what's the point?"

"The point of what?" April asked.

"For... trying so hard? So many people do it every day, and no matter what, they are told they are inadequate, either through words, or action. This creature... those people in Derry confronted it twice, and it still lived. Among other things... what's the point of trying when failure seems statistically inevitable?" Donnie asked.

"Donnie... you can't just give up. Look... we have nothing to lose by testing this theory. If anyone can help us figure out the answer, it's you." April took a step closer, standing at his side. "You know how they feel deep down. All jokes and teasing aside, they appreciate and respect your intelligence. Your knowledge. You've gotten all of us out

of plenty of jams, and you're going to help us get out of this one."

"And what do you feel deep down, April?" Donnie asked, finally meeting her gaze with his own. "What do you feel, deep down... for me?"

April furrowed a brow, parting her lips slightly for a moment. "Donnie... what are you-"

"I saw you last night." He cut her off. "I saw you kiss him. Casey. And now, you both supposedly have some mysterious telepathy ability. Just another thing you two have in common... and another thing we don't." He looked down, exhaling sharply.

After a few moments, April realized what he was speaking of. "Donnie, look. What you saw- Casey kissed ME. We were-"

"You didn't stop him." He interrupted. "In fact, from what I saw... you seemed to be enjoying yourself. Don't get me wrong, April. I'm not going to hold it against you. You are free to give your heart to whomever you wish. I respect that. I respect you as a ma-" He stopped himself. "I respect you, as anyone... should respect a woman. But please, April... don't try to make me feel better for the sake of my feelings. As much as it hurts... in the end, your safety, well-being, and happiness... is my main priority." As he said this, April's heart sunk. She could tell he was trying to hold himself together. Next to Leo, he was arguably the most mature of the group despite being the second youngest. However, when she caught a glimpse of his downcast eyes, she could see he was breaking apart on the inside.

"Donnie..." April frowned. "I... I didn't mean to-..." She sighed, hugging herself as she glanced to the side. "I don't know what I feel right now. Nothing is certain, everything is being piled on our shoulders... and I know these are all really just excuses, but... I'm not thinking with a clear head. The fact is, I don't have the answer. Not for us, not for Casey and I, this creature, this doctor whatever, this city..." April let her head fall back as she exhaled sharply. "... and I'm scared, Donnie. I'm trying to be brave, but I am-... more scared now than I ever have been in my life. We're going on guesses here. This thing... makes you feel powerless. It's like a chill I can't get warm from. And... I know this sounds so, so selfish, Donnie, but I don't

want to lose any of you. So, before I can figure out what we have, or don't have, or what I may have with someone else, I need to make sure that by tomorrow, and the next day, and the day after that, I still have YOU. I need to make sure I have you, and Leo, and Raph, and Mikey, and Splinter, and Casey. Because you are all I have." Her voice began to tremble then. "If I lost you guys, I would have nothing. I would BE nothing. I-"

Donnie got out of his chair, wrapping his arms around her in a gentle hug. He could feel her lip trembling against his shoulder, one of his large hands petting her hair. "I'm not going anywhere, April. No matter what I have to do to stay around for you... I will do it. Even if you go somewhere I can't follow, I will wait. And if armageddon does come... regardless of how it does, I will be right by your side, fighting with you."

April smiled lightly, reaching up to wipe her face before returning the hug. "I know, Donnie. I know that you've always been there."

"You've always been there too, April. And trust me... you're not the only one who's scared of losing someone they care about. I may look big and scary, but looks can be deceiving." He managed a chuckle, April doing the same before they each took a step back.

"So... I guess I have some work cut out for me, huh?" She asked.

"It would seem so. But, this guy didn't leave you a number. How are you supposed to get in contact with him?" Donnie asked.

"I may have an idea..." April replied, her voice fading a bit.

Meanwhile, Leo nodded slowly. "I can see why what he said must have come as a shock. So do you think he's the real deal?"

"How else would he have known that, Leo? He's got to be some kind of mind reader. I didn't believe it at first, but when he said my father's words, exactly how he said them to me... I couldn't just wave him off as some loony anymore." Casey said.

April and Donnie returned then, the latter sighing lightly. "Okay. Here's what I think would be the best course of action. If we can

figure out how April and Casey can activate this... 'Shine...' then I can hook up nodes to several lobe points and monitor their brain activity, as well as take heat and electro-chemical readings."

"Aw man! I don't want to read..." Mikey pouted. "Wait. Unless it's a comic book."

Donnie sighed. "Not that kind of reading, Mikey. Besides, I'll be interpreting the readings. If this doctor can understand numbers, perhaps we can determine if their brain activity generates enough of a 'Shine' to hold their own against the creature."

"Okay, well while Donnie talks like a textbook over here, when are we supposed to hear back from this guy, anyway?" Raph asked.

"Donnie?" April asked then, furrowing a brow. "Do you have a phone jack in your lab?"

"A phone jack? Uh, I suppose I could easily install one... why?" Donnie rose a brow.

"He's talking to me." April said barely above a whisper. "This is... so weird..." She glanced over at Casey.

"I hear him too. He's telling us to set up one of those old dial phones with a phone jack. It's the safest way." Casey replied.

Leo glanced between the two of them, a bit taken aback by the phenomenon that seemed to be happening with the pair. He glanced at Donnie, nodding to him before he went to get a phone set up in the lab. Once the pair entered, Donnie cleared his throat.

"Seems to be working fine. Don't worry, it's been properly sanitized-" Just then, the phone rang, making him jump. April walked over, cautiously picking it up.

"Hello?" She answered.

"Hello, April. I'm going to be giving you and Casey instructions in order to develop your shine. Unfortunately, time is not on our side, but I'm going to help you as much as I can. My life, as well as... several others, are on the line along with yours. If I'm not wrong,

your turtle friends are going to be attempting to study your development. Though there is nothing wrong with that, trying to get them to comprehend exactly how shining functions is not ideal right now. You cannot allow Pennywise to discover your awakened power."

"Okay... so what do we do?" April asked.

"Please put me on speaker so Casey can hear me as well."

As the pair listened in, Splinter entered the area, Leo sighing lightly. "I'm nervous, dad." He said quietly to him.

"I know you are, my son. But you must remember what I told you; not all enemies can be defeated by the same weapon. Not all are the same. As warriors, you must know when it is the time to fight, and when it is the time to protect." Splinter replied.

"I understand." He said. "Now I need to get the others to understand. We can't be having them diving into something they don't know anything about. As arrogant he can be, I know Raph means well at heart. But I'm worried he's going to get himself killed one of these days." Leo glanced over at Raph, who shook his head and rolled his eyes as he listened to Doctor Sleep speaking over the phone. "He thinks with his muscles, not with his mind."

"You have encountered these obstacles before, Leonardo, and you have helped your brothers to overcome them. You can do that again. You must, if you wish to have any chance to succeed." Splinter said.

Later on that night, Casey grabbed his back pack, nodding to April. "Hey, Red. Think you want to give that a rest now?"

"I need to keep trying, Casey. Everyone is depending on us now." She replied.

"Whatever. Give me a buzz in the morning." He said before taking his leave.

As April continued to focus, the turtles sat in some chairs, eating pizza. "Been a while since we had some of this, huh? Like the good

old times..." Mikey smiled contently.

"Mikey, we just had pizza about three days ago." Leo said to him.

"I know... so short, yet so far..." Mikey nodded his head slowly, Leo snickering as he shook his head.

"So what's up with the funny guy? We haven't heard nothing about it since we saw it in the park." Raph asked. "Maybe it decided to take its circus act somewhere else."

"Unlikely." Donnie spoke. "It may just be waiting for us to make a move."

"Or it's biding its time and waiting for us to let our guard down." Leo said. "That's the last thing we're going to do."

"Anything on the news, Leo?" Donnie asked, taking a bite of his pizza slice.

"Nothing out of the ordinary... aside from that Grayson Roberts guy campaigning." Leo said.

"Screw that guy. Now he's saying he's going to start giving mutants faction labels if he's elected." Raph hissed.

"Fractions?! We have to do math homework?!" Mikey exclaimed.

"No, Mikey. Faction labels. Essentially, it means that mutants will receive a coded card with an assigned power division based on their abilities. It's all a part of this new mutant classification system Roberts is proposing." Donnie said.

"It's sick. Next they'll staple a tag in our ear like we're rats." Raph snapped.

"Raph!" Leo hissed. "Sensei could be listening!"

"I hope he is. Because if he comes face to face with that asshole, that's all he'll see him as, just some oversized rodent. He won't see him for how smart and kind he is." Raph said before sighing, leaning back. The group was silent for a moment, their expressions downcast.

"Look. You have a right to be concerned about that. We'll figure out what do about that after we deal with the bigger problem first." Leo said.

"Right... your 'priorities.' Well, what if we end up in some kind of mutant prison before then, huh? Hey, who knows? Now that April and Casey are all 'voodoo mind readers' now, maybe they'll get tossed in the can too." Raph said.

Donnie interjected then. "Raphael, their newfound ability does not classify them as mutants. As I said, mutants are a result of a cellular enhancement due to a chemical reaction-

"Donnie, your glasses are about to have a chemical reaction when my fist turns them into contacts." Raph snapped at him, shaking his head.

As the brothers bickered, April furrowed her brows as her mind began to wander. She shook her head when she heard someone giggle, sitting up to look around. She heard the sound coming from the tunnels, getting up to wander towards them. The giggling grew louder until she stopped, coming upon a child who was standing in the middle of the tunnel. "Hey... what are you doing down here?" The boy was quiet for a moment, simply staring at her.

"Don't follow the bad lights." He whispered, slowly backing away. April went to follow him when suddenly, fire erupted behind her.

"No- nonononono-" She began to run, trying to get back to the lair. When she turned the corner, she gasped when she found herself in her father's laboratory. "Donnie? Leo?" She called out before turning around to go back, only to see that a locked door now stood behind her. She was trapped, beginning to scream and cry out as she tried to unlock the door to no avail. She then heard someone call her name, slowly turning to see someone rising from the flames.

"April. Close your eyes." Her father said as his body charred. "You mustn't let it get to you."

"D- Dad?!" April choked, about to run over to him when part of the ceiling caved in, keeping them separated.

"Don't you see? The flames are all around you, but you are unharmed." He said, and as she looked around her, she realized he was right.

"Is- Is any of this real?" April asked.

"It was. Now, it's like a picture. You can see it, but it cannot hurt you." He said, and April nodded. "You have to just remember that, and then you can free yourself from what you see whenever you wish- like closing a book."

"Dad... are you really here?" Her voice became quiet.

"I never left you, sweetheart." He smiled lightly. "I always wanted to do good for the world, and I realized that I had already done that. You were my greatest gift. But you have to be careful, April. Something so precious is often sought out by nefarious individuals. I'm saying this not because I don't love you, or that I don't want to see you... but I don't think it would be wise to find me again. Something is after you, April. You have to protect yourself." As he spoke, April returned his smile, trying to extend a hand toward him as the fiery world around her dissolved. Soon, she was back in the lair, her breath hitching as she stumbled a bit. Everything was as it normally was, April slowly shuffling over to the couch to sit as she attempted to process what she had just experienced. As she did, she jolted when the telephone rang from Donnie's lab. She quickly got to her feet, shuffling over to answer it. "Hello?"

"You shined, April. I could sense it."

"Hi... wait, I did?" She replied.

"Yes. You saw your father inside his burning laboratory. You're doing very well, April. But you have to be careful. Shining to such capacity could attract others who can sense the shine. This is both an achievement and a risk for you."

"So what do I do?" She asked.

"Try starting off smaller. Try to see what's right in front of you, or behind you. Become accustomed to your shine. Just remember not to

shine too brightly, not yet."

"Okay... okay, um... I'll try that." April said.

"I can tell that you're nervous. You have every right to be. I assure you, the shine will not harm you, and neither will the visions. You are reading a book with no words. That's all you have to do for now."

"Wait, doctor, um... how do I get in touch with you, being I don't have your number?" April asked.

"Don't worry about that. When you develop your shine more, we won't need this phone."

"Right... thank you, doctor." She said.

"I'm going to leave for now... someone's being a bit curious. I'll talk to you soon."

The call ended with a click, April placing the phone back on the hook. When she turned around, she smirked when she saw someone duck behind the couch. "Mikey, I saw you."

"Aw, man..." He stood up, walking over to her. "Was just seeing if you needed some company." He sat down next to her.

"I... I saw something, Mikey."

"You did? Was it a spider? Show me where it is, I can take care of that." He said.

"No, I mean... I saw my dad. With she shine. I need to tell the others..."

"Woah... so you really do have mind powers, huh? Wait, can you tell what I'm thinking?" He asked, shutting his eyes tightly as April couldn't help but chuckle.

"No, Mikey, not like that. At least, not that I know of..." She looked ahead. "Maybe Casey is right. I need to give my brain a rest. He's coming back tomorrow, so we can set everything up in Donnie's lab."

"Do you really think you can beat the scary clown dude?" He asked.

"I hope so. I don't know how this is all going to work, but... let's hope it does." She said, getting to her feet. "I'm going to head home."

"Want me to walk you back? After all, the nights are getting cooler. I may be cold-blooded, but I can warm up my girl if she needs it."

"Mikey." Donnie approached, staring at him flatly. "I'll walk you home, April." He said.

"Actually, I'm walking her home. You have work to do for tomorrow, Donnie. Mikey, do not bother him while he's setting everything up. And Raph..." Leo turned as the red-scarfed turtle entered the area. "I'm leaving you in charge to make sure they do as I asked them. Come on, April." Leo said, April saying goodnight before they departed. Donnie sighed, going to his lab as Raph smirked lightly.

"So, I'm in charge, huh? Alright, Mikey. Ready to brawl?" He cracked his knuckles.

"You're going to regret going up against my epic battling skills, my main dude." Mikey snickered, the pair going over to the couch as Donnie rolled his eyes.

This was going to be a long evening.

Alright, there we have it! So, what did you guys think? The next couple chapters may be a bit slow, so bear with me as I try to build up the plot some more. I have a general idea of where I want this story to go, and I'm hoping you all enjoy it! So please leave a review with your thoughts- I have been reading them and I appreciate everyone's input! So thank you again for reading, and I'll see you next time!

17. Seeing Red And Black

Good evening, everyone! I am back a bit sooner than anticipated, but I've made some good progress! There's going to be some interesting developments in this chapter, so get comfy and please enjoy!

The following day, after work shifts were done, April and Casey returned to the lair. Donnie sat them both down, attaching small nodes to different points on their head. The wires were attached to a device which reported readings that would appear on the screens.

"Okay. The screen displays are simple. These are images of each of your brains. Based on your brain activity, the presence of strong electro-chemical signals will be indicated by a colored hue." Donnie said.

"Well, THAT explains everything!" Mikey suddenly exclaimed.

"Wait, wait. Did he just have an epiphany or something?" Raph asked. "Oh boy... yeah, we're all going to die."

"Raph." Leo shot him a look. "What is it, Mikey?"

"Well, our brains are supposed to be grey, right? Like 'grey matter' or whatever?" He asked.

"Yes, Mikey... and?" Donnie shook his head with bewilderment.

"Well, that's why April and Casey have super mind control! Look at their brains! They're rainbow colored! That has to be why they're super duper awesome!" Mikey beamed. "I'm a genius!"

Donnie groaned, pinching the bridge of his nose. "Mikey, that's not-

"Thank you for contributing that, Mikey." Leo said, eying Donnie and motioning for him to just move on.

"Anyway." Donnie spoke. "There is also a digital bar measurement of the potency of the electro-chemical signal on the screen, at several

points of distance away. This will determine the circumference of its influence."

"Great. Can we get this started already?" Casey asked.

Just then, the telephone rang. Mikey went over, picking it up. "This is the Mikester, how can I help you?" He asked before Leo snatched the phone out of his hand, Raph snickering lightly as he shook his head.

"Hello, doctor. Yes, they're all set up. Okay, hang on." Leo said before putting him on speaker.

"Okay. I want you both to concentrate. Let your mind be open. Try to let it wander toward another presence. If it becomes uncomfortable or threatening, close your eyes and open them again. Start fresh."

The turtles watched intently as the pair followed the doctor's instructions, Donnie occasionally glancing at his screens. He began to see an increase in color hue, making sure his computer was taking reading measurements. As the seconds passed, Casey's mind was drawn to something, glancing over.

He was met with the sight of a cut up, bleeding Purple Dragon gang member.

He hissed, shutting his eyes tightly. "Shit."

"Very good, Casey. This is the most important part of developing your shine. There are forces that seek to dim it. You have to resist their influence. Take what message they may bear, but nothing more. Do not let fear cripple you." The doctor said from the phone.

"I didn't see anything." Mikey whispered to Donnie.

"We can't, Mikey. Our minds can't do what theirs can." He replied.

April was staring straight ahead, tilting her head slowly. As Casey continued to focus on catching another glimpse of something, April saw someone silently make their way into the lab. She walked as if she were upon air, her toes not making a sound on the floor. "... Mom?"

The woman approached slowly, her long, flowing red hair falling to her mid-back. She held a single, red rose, extending her hand. April reached out, the group seeing her take something that they could not see. Donnie looked at his screen, noticing the color hue from April reaching far past Casey's.

"Alright, April. You're doing great, just dial it back a bit, okay?"

April looked back up to see that the woman was gone. Trying to look for her, she suddenly found her again, her back turned. Now, she was wearing a black hat, matching her dress. She slowly turned, glancing over her shoulder to reveal crimson red eyes. At this, April looked down, seeing that she was no longer holding a rose, but a red balloon. "M- Mom...?"

"April. Listen to me. You need to bring your shine back. The creature is beginning to sense you."

Casey furrowed his brows, able to see Pennywise in place of the woman it was using as a mask for April. He quickly shut his eyes, keeping them shut for several moments before opening them, no longer seeing it there. "April, close your eyes."

Donnie went over to his computers, typing a few things in. "Donnie, what's happening?" Leo asked.

"Her electro-chemical emissions are off the charts, look at this." He said, Leo walking over to look before glancing back at April.

"April, can you hear me? April, Pennywise sees you. You have to cut your shine off." The doctor said.

"Guys, does she have a brain freeze?" Mikey asked worriedly.

"I have no clue, but I'm taking those things off of her." Raph was about to head over, when Leo stopped him.

"We need to understand what's happening here before we do anything rash." Leo said.

"What's happening is that I'm going to snap April out of whatever magical trance she's under before her brain turns into a swamp."

Raph said, shoving his brother out of the way.

"April, close your eyes, damn it!" Casey bit his lip. When April continued to stare ahead in a daze, he shook his head. "Fuck this." He said, taking off his nodes and hopping out of his chair. April's eyes began to roll up as the woman gravitated closer and closer, her body beginning to separate from the chair as she began to levitate. Casey pulled the nodes off, grabbing her shoulders to shake her. "April, look at me. April!" As he did this, she saw the woman lurch back, as if she were pushed. She then heard her fading scream as she seemed to fall into the Earth, gasping as her eyes returned. She took in deep breaths, her eyes darting as her brain readings decreased in colored hue. Her heart rate began to stabilize, Casey sighing with relief as Donnie rushed over to remove the rest of the nodes and wires. He held up a light, attempting to test her pupil reaction. "Jeez, can you give her a second to breathe?" Casey snapped.

"I'm trying to test her vitals, Casey." Donnie replied, shooting a look at him as he took out a cloth to dab her forehead with.

"April? April, can you hear me?" Doctor Sleep said from the phone.

"I- I... yeah..." She said, still in a bit of a daze. "What... did I do something wrong?"

"No, you didn't. But unfortunately, you've been exposed. The creature now knows of your shine, April. It's going to determine its next course of action based on that."

"Well, this was a stupid idea then, wasn't it? Why the hell did you put her up to this in the first place, huh doc?" Raph exclaimed. "Funny how you won't man up and do this yourself, but you expect April to put her life at risk for this voodoo shit!"

"Raphael. You must calm yourself." Splinter said, Raph hissing and quieting in response.

"I completely understand Raphael's frustration. There is a reason I am here, and not there. My shine is far more developed, but I went through a trying period in my life which caused it to waver. Attempting to challenge the creature, and failing, will only add a

significant amount to its power. There is also another reason I must stay away, something that is my own personal responsibility and not yours. There is someone who needs me near, who needs protection. I know that several of you understand that better than anyone."

Leo glanced over when he said this, giving a nod. "Yeah... I do."

"So what are we supposed to do now?" Casey asked.

"You both must continue to try and develop your shine. As for the turtles, the need to protect them is greater now than ever. They are in more danger now that it knows that they stand a formidable chance against it. It will continue to use its power of manipulation to achieve its goal. It is essential that this does not happen."

"I understand." Leo replied. "We will protect them. We will protect this city."

"I will contact you tomorrow. I advise that you watch over April and maintain your security measures." The doctor said before a click was heard.

"Nothing will happen to her. I'm going to make sure of that." Donnie said a bit quieter. At this, Casey gave him a flat look.

"Oh, come on, inspector gadget. You've got no love for me in that big shell of yours?" Casey asked sarcastically.

Donnie shot him a look, helping April out of her chair before gently scooping her up. "She's going to stay here for the night."

Leo sighed. "Donnie, Casey and I can bring her back home-"

"She's staying here, Leo." Donnie snapped at him uncharacteristically before taking her to the couch to rest. In response, Leo sighed, turning to the others.

"Let's break for the night. Casey, are you feeling well enough to walk on your own?"

"Yeah, I'm fine." He said, getting to his feet. "Keep me posted on Red, will you?"

"Sure." Leo nodded.

Casey grabbed his back pack, and before he knew it, he was back in his apartment, staring at his ceiling fan. As he watched it spin aimlessly, fragments of memory flashed through his mind like a strobe light. He hissed out a breath, turning on his side. "The hell am I supposed to do, dad?" He said to the emptiness of the room, throwing the covers over his head.

The following morning, April blinked awake, groaning lightly as she returned to her senses. She slowly sat up, blowing at several messy locks of hair hanging on her face. She barely had a chance to allow awareness to settle in when Mikey's voice sounded.

"Guys, she's awake!" He exclaimed before crouching near her. "April, can you hear me? Are you still brain dead?"

"Uh... hey, Mikey. I don't... think so?" She mumbled.

"Whew! That's good. Donnie would be totally broken up if you weren't all smart and stuff anymore." He snickered.

"Mikey, please move over." Donnie's voice was heard then, crouching down. "Forgive me, April, just taking some basic vitals... okay, heart rate is good, pupils... good dilation/shrinkage ratio..."

"Maybe you could just ask her how she feels instead of doing all that, Einstein." Raph approached then.

"I feel... tired... my head's a bit foggy. I remember seeing my mom. But then... I saw someone else. Someone else with red hair. I don't know who she is. And then I saw that thing." She spat the last word. As she did, the phone suddenly rang. Donnie was about to take it, wanting to give the doctor a piece of his mind, but Leo grabbed it before him as he approached.

"Hello?" Leo answered.

"Good morning, Leo. I wanted to know how April was doing."

"She just woke up. I can have her contact you later if-"

"Leo." April interrupted. "I have... questions."

"Okay." As Leo handed her the phone, he leaned closer to Donnie to speak to him. "Tap the call."

"You got it." Donnie said, going to his lab area to listen in.

"Doctor... I don't understand what happened. Why-"

"I'm sorry, April. I unintentionally allowed you to be exposed to things you should not have been exposed to. Though I learned something very important last night, it came at a great risk to you."

"What- What do you mean?" April sat up a bit more.

"The creature has gained more influence over the last near three decades than I thought. I dealt with a certain problem some years back, something that is unnecessary to discuss the details of right now. I should have made this connection earlier, I should have seen the signs. The woman you saw had abilities much like you and I. But she was not altruistic, April. Rather, the very opposite. She, along with others, attempted to gain immortal power by abducting shiners-particularly, those who were children, and tortured them until death in order to extract it from them. What does this sound very much like, April?"

"... Pennywise. It's exactly what he does." She breathed.

"You can look in your database I'm sure and see articles of children going missing in areas out west. To make my point plain, April... Pennywise does not always kill every individual in its path. Remember that it is a manipulative being. Therefore, some are better alive than dead. Those select few it allows to live have far too much darkness in their hearts to be redeemed. It gave them the means to destroy those who had the power to destroy him, and in exchange, they would reap their reward in the form of immortality. This is why I cannot face the creature myself, April. It knows me, it knows my niece." He paused, April hesitating as well. "I too... have those I must protect. I did from those who looked upon Pennywise as a deity. You see, after the second showdown in Derry, though it survived, it was very weak and required to travel to a place where it could feast,

regain strength. There were those along the way who still posed a threat. If it could, it would have eliminated all shiners in their youth. This is why you are in grave danger now, April. It knows you have awakened this power. You must stay safe, and keep close to only those you trust most."

"I understand." She replied. "I feel like every time I think that this thing can't get any more dangerous..."

"Going forward, I will try to take more precaution with you. I suggest you keep Casey close as well. Nothing can happen to either of you."

"Yes, I will." April said. "Thank you for telling me what you know. I can see we both have a lot of work to do before we can take on Pennywise."

"That is correct. I will keep in touch, April." The doctor said before the call ended.

Donnie stared at his computer screen, his lips slightly parted as he sat in shock. He slowly glanced over at Leo, who tightened his lips for a moment. "Donnie, get the others. We're doing a huddle, now."

As Splinter brought April something to eat, the four brothers met in their dining area. Leo stared at the table's surface for a few moments in thought before lifting his head. "I'm going to make something very clear. I don't have all the answers this time. I don't have a solid plan. This is becoming bigger than any of us thought it would."

"Thanks, captain obvious. So what are we supposed to do then?" Raph asked.

"We don't have the means to kill this thing." Leo held up his swords. "This, or any of your weapons, or our fists, will not kill this thing. We can't use our skills and tools to kill this time."

"So what good are they, then? What can we use them for?" Raph asked.

"To protect. If April and Casey are the ones who can destroy this monster, then all we can do is protect them so they can save this city." He looked around at the others. "Look. We've had our glory

moments. We've had our fun. We've had our triumphs not only as a team, but as brothers." He exhaled slowly. "A short while ago, sensei told us that we had to learn to take responsibility seriously, that we're not children anymore. Part of doing that is knowing when to step back. Knowing what we need to do at what time, not what we want to do. Because believe me... I want to tear this monster to pieces, I want to slice it to bits. But that's not going to help anyone. So the only plan that I have is setting up measures to keep April and Casey safe. What do you guys think?"

He was met with silence for a moment, before Mikey broke it. "Protecting people is the right thing to do, bro... and I don't want anything to happen to April or Casey either. But do you think their mind control power will really work?"

"I can't say for sure, Mikey." Leo replied.

"I think they should stay here." Donnie said. "Even with the security equipment I set up... it could still find some way to get her. On her way to work, going down the street... we saw that firsthand."

Meanwhile, April thanked Splinter for the meal, handing him her dishes. "I feel a little better. I just... need some time to process all of this."

"A great deal has been placed upon you in a short time, April. It seems you are the one in need of training now. You are doing well. I can see your effort. Though I may not fully understand your power, I understand the young woman who wields it." He said.

Just then, April's phone buzzed. "Probably Casey..." She said to herself as she grabbed it, but wore a surprised expression when she glanced at it. "Huh... it's Grayson."

"I do not particularly trust that fellow." Splinter said.

"Neither do I... but I'm hoping if we stay on his good side, it will solve one problem. The last thing you need is to be treated like a second class citizen while all of this is happening." April said.

"Don't fret over that right now, April. We must remember priority,

what is most important. His small-mindedness is not our greatest concern at this time." Splinter advised.

"You're right... I can't just blow him off, though. I should really take some time to see him... at least tell him that we're working on something." She said.

Just then, Casey made his way into the lair, looking around until he spotted April. "Hey. Feeling better?"

"Yeah... what about you?"

"Head's still spinning, but... that's a given." He nodded at Splinter as he sat beside April. As he did, he gave her a flat look when he caught a glimpse of her phone, taking it out of her hand and holding it up. "Really? This asshole?"

"Casey!" She exclaimed, snatching her phone from him. "It's not like he's my boyfriend."

"The hell he isn't. What does he want?" He asked.

"He wants to know if we've made any progress with Pennywise." She replied. "He said I can stop by his office when-"

"You mean WE can stop by his office. April, I don't know about you, but I'm not going to take any chances." Casey said.

April couldn't help but smirk at this. "Since when are you not a gambler?"

"Since shit got real." He said, sighing a bit. "You going to work today?"

"I guess... I figure I'd do a light day today." She replied.

"I'll walk you there." He said as he rose to his feet. As April began to get her things together, the turtles entered, having finished their huddle.

"Uh... April? What're you doing?" Donnie asked.

"Getting ready for work." She chuckled.

"Are you sure that's a good idea after yesterday's incident?" He asked.

"She's fine." Casey interjected.

"Really? Can your new mind powers determine that or are you taking a wild guess?"

"Donnie." Leo shot him a look. "April, please let us know if you aren't feeling well at any point."

"I will. As annoying as you can all can be sometimes, it means a lot that you guys care so much." She smiled as she grabbed her purse, bidding the turtles and Splinter goodbye as she headed out with Casey.

Going to end this chapter here! So, do April and Casey have to watch their backs? Will the turtles be able to protect them from Pennywise? Will Grayson help, or harm them? Find out these answers and more in the next update! Thank you again for reading, and let me know what you think! See you next time!

18. Caught Off Guard

Hello, everyone! I hope you are having a fantastic week so far, and that you're ready for a chapter chock full of action, drama, twists and turns! This one is sure to keep you on the edge of your seats, so prepare yourself! At any rate, please enjoy!

Once Casey walked April to work, he sighed as he clocked in at the pizzeria. Work was a good distraction for him, but during slower periods, he couldn't help but try to focus on his shine. Before he knew it, his boss nudged him.

"Hey. Your shift's over. You've been running around here like a maniac." He said.

"Better than being a slacker, right?" Casey replied.

"Yeah, yeah, you're a real overachiever. Go home and chill out, will ya?"

"Sure." He said more to himself, grabbing his things to leave.

Meanwhile, April exhaled as she waited outside the news station. She got on her communicator, messaging Leo that she was waiting for Casey. Sometimes, she wished she didn't have to be escorted back and forth- she hoped that once this was all over, she didn't have to be such a burden on her friends. As the sun began to set, illuminating the sky between the buildings with a colorful glow, she smiled lightly when Casey approached.

"Hey. How was work? You smell amazing as always." She chuckled.

"I only smell amazing? Come on, Red, you've got to do better than that."

"Okay, okay, come on. You've got me starving now." April said, the pair turning to head towards the lair.

"Ms. O'Neil."

April turned, Casey hissing lowly as a familiar face approached. "Hey, Mr. Roberts."

"You're doing well, I hope?" He asked, giving a polite but wary nod to Casey, who merely stared at him.

"Yes, and you?" She replied.

"I'm doing very well. I was hoping to steal you away for some time. I wanted to discuss-"

"She's about to have some dinner. Long day worked up an appetite." Casey cut her off.

"Well, no doubt being around you certainly would. April, I can have something a bit more appetizing delivered to my office, if you like. And before you ask, it's my treat." Grayson replied.

"Sounds more like a hot date to me." Casey spat as April cleared her throat.

"Mr. Jones..." Grayson chuckled. "... I'm not offended by your words for the simple reason that I am pretty certain that you don't have the slightest clue what a business meeting entails."

"Business? That's what you're after, huh? I can give you all the business you want, pal-"

"Casey." April sighed. "Yes, we can catch up a bit and I'll fill you in on what's going on."

"Very good. I'll wait for you to wish Mr. Jones a good evening. I would do so myself, but he never seems to not be in a sour mood." He chuckled lightly before wandering off.

As April turned to say something to Casey, he took hold of her arm. "April, do you honestly think I'm just going to let you go with this guy?"

"Casey, I know you two don't see eye to eye, but he is trying to help us. Can you please just cooperate?" She asked.

He hissed out a breath. "Fine." He said with clenched teeth. "As soon as you're done though, you call me and I'm getting you the hell out of there. I hate that jackass."

"Thank you. I'll see you later." April said before walking toward Grayson.

As Casey watched the pair walk down the street, he shook his head, an uneasy feeling growing in his gut. He dug into his pocket, grabbing his communicator. "Hey."

"Casey? Are you guys almost here? It's getting dark out." Donnie spoke.

"Thanks for stating the obvious, four-eyes. No, the town mayor decided he wanted to have a meeting with April at his office. I'm giving them a head start before."

"You LET her go with him, ALONE?! Are you crazy?!" Donnie exclaimed, Casey pulling away from the communicator as he freaked out.

"Will you shut up for a second and listen? I'm going to track them to his office and wait outside. I can't get inside without breaking in because it's like fort knox and the windows are tinted. I was about to ask you to meet me there in case I need backup, but if you're going to blast out my eardrums, then-"

"I will meet you there in a few minutes." Donnie said tensely before cutting off the call. Casey sighed, shoving the communicator back into his pocket as he mumbled to himself.

Grayson and April finally reached his office building, heading up to his office where they settled in. "So April, what are you in the mood to eat? Here's a menu from the building's cuisine service if you're lacking ideas." He said, handing her the menu. "So... you have some good news to share, I hope?"

"Well..." April started as her eyes scanned the menu. "... it's... interesting news. We might be able to make some kind of breakthrough. I've been speaking to someone who's been trying to

help us. The fact is... this thing can't be killed by any assault weapon."

"So have you been able to come to any solution, then?" He asked.

"This is... some sort of psychological being. It's going to take someone with a strong mind to do it. So, Mr. Roberts... the reason I wanted to see you is because... I'm going to need protection." She said. "I don't want to put my friends at any more risk. They've done that already more than I'd like."

Grayson pursed his lip for a moment. "Consider it done."

April blinked. "Really? I- I mean, you don't want me to make a formal request, or-"

"April, I've already stated that I'm willing to provide anything you need. You are the most important player in all this." He replied. "By the way, have you decided what you'd like to have?"

"Hm? O- Oh, yes." April said, telling him her order as she handed back the menu. She shifted a bit in her seat as Grayson got on his phone, calling in the meal.

Meanwhile, Casey glanced over as Donnie approached. "I could electrocute you for this." He crossed his arms, not at all in a pleasant mood.

"Look, I tried to talk her out of it. She thinks he's trying to help." Casey said.

"Yes, April tries to see the best in people. Knowing that, you should have insisted." Donnie said. "By the way, this wouldn't have been an issue if you would have let her just stay in the lair and rest today."

"Will you knock it off? Look, I get it, you're head over heels for her. Here's a wake up call, Romeo; so is half of the city. It doesn't make you any more special."

"Half the city isn't as valued by her as I am, and vice versa." Donnie said. "They think she's beautiful, but they don't love her."

"Oh my- this isn't a Disney movie, Donnie. You aren't going to turn into a prince if she kisses you."

"I wouldn't expect to, the species of the story you're referencing was a frog. Turtles are reptiles, Casey, not amphibians."

"Now you're just being a wiseass." Casey snapped. "Seriously, what do you think? Do you think if you play hero enough times she'll give you a chance?"

"I don't try to 'play hero' with her, Casey. I'm not entertaining this conversation anymore. You're just taking your own insecurities out on me."

"My insecurities? You just can't deal with the fact that she's-"

"Human? And I'm not?" Donnie glared at him. "And you believe that grants you a pass, then? You know what, Casey? You're the one who tries to play hero. If April was in peril, I would be ready to die for her. That's right. You think you're right for her, but could you tell me, right now, that you would die for her without hesitation? See my face, Casey? It's not a human face, but it's dead serious. Think about that the next time you want to have petty banter with me about her." Donnie said before turning to glance away from him, Casey raising his brows in slight surprise.

April glanced over her shoulder as the door opened, Grayson looking up and smiling lightly as an attendant wheeled a cart in with their meals. As they were served, he poured himself some wine.

"Thank you for this... you really didn't have to go through the trouble." April said.

Grayson exhaled slowly. "Ms. O'Neil... you have been a great assistance to me. You see... when I was a boy, I had dreams, like many other children." He pursed his lip. "My sister and I wanted to do great things. I saw that greatness through a political scope. She went another path, but regardless, we never lost sight of that goal. And we also never lost sight of each other. Until, of course... she was killed."

April frowned at this then. "Mr. Roberts... I'm so sorry. I can see why

addressing crime means so much to you."

"You have always seemed very insightful, April. As you may be aware... everything has a price. The price to pay is not always monetary, in fact, more often than not, it isn't. There are far more valuable things out there than money. It was powerful for a long time, but... not anymore, not really." He said.

As April listened to him, she glanced over her shoulder, noticing the attendant was standing by the cart, facing the wall. "Is he... waiting for something?"

"No, April. Just for us to finish our conversation." Grayson replied as he sipped from his glass. "There is one more thing I want to show you before you leave here. I know I have not mentioned my sister before today... but we all have a motive behind our actions. They can range from a variety of qualities... for me, I want to finish what she started. You see... the two of us had a troubled upbringing, like many children can claim. She and I were all we had. She and I supported each other's dreams, our goals. When she was taken from me... I swore I would work just as hard to attain her goal as well as my own." He reached over to a drawer, taking out a photograph to hand to April. When she looked at it, however, her heart skipped a beat.

It was the woman she had seen in her vision- long red hair, donning a black hat, dress and shoes.

"Wait a second, wait a second, I know this woman." April breathed.

"Correction... you have seen her. You don't know her. You will never know her, Ms. O'Neil." Grayson said before glancing behind her.

"What do you mean by-" Before she could see what he had glanced at, she was suddenly seized and restrained. Her eyes darted to see she had been grabbed by the very same woman, the attendant no longer there. As she grinned, however, she revealed rows of sharp teeth. While this happened, Grayson rose to his feet, taking another sip of his wine.

"Let me explain this situation, April. I know that the man who you have been obtaining your resources from is the very same man

responsible for my sister's death. Once I'm able to find him, he will be dealt with accordingly. But first, I have bigger fish to fry- oh, wait, let me rephrase that. I have bigger turtles to stew. Ah, yes, that's more appropriate." He said as he approached her.

April furrowed her brows as she struggled. "I- I don't understand! Why, what does any of this have to do with-"

"You see, Pennywise doesn't kill everyone, April. Only those who threaten its well-being. I'm a man of compromise, of mutual exchange. When you and your delinquent friend are destroyed, I'm going to acquire your shine. It will be powerful enough to destroy the man who murdered my sister. You see, that was what she strived for... immortality. No, actually, I'm not going to kill him. Rather, I will destroy the one person in his life who is precious to him, just as my sister was the one precious thing in my life. An eye for an eye, so to speak. Many would believe my sister was evil... but she was everything to me. Sounds familiar, doesn't it? Your turtles mean everything by you and many look at them as if they are monsters as well. What would you do to save them, April? If you can answer that, you can understand the reason for my actions." He said.

"By siding with this- thing?! You're supposed to be saving everyone from it, not helping it!" April shouted.

"Don't worry. Soon, everyone will see the truth as I will for them to see it. They will see your turtle friends as the monsters. All the while, the creature will be satisfied, and I will get what I want... as well as avenge my sister's death by satisfying her life's intention. And you're going to be the face that makes that happen." As he said this, he took a rose from his desk, smelling it for a moment. "They really are the perfect flower. Beautiful, but scornful." He nodded to the creature impersonating his sister, April's screams muffled as she was smuggled out of the office. As he went back to sit down, he took the picture of his sister into his hand, drinking the rest of his wine. "I'm not afraid of your face." He spoke lowly. "Not anymore."

He set the photo down, placing the wine away before adjusting his tie. He walked out of the office, making his way down the hall. When he turned into the lobby, dead bodies now scattered the space. He glanced down, pursing his lip for a moment as he looked upon the

body of the attendant Pennywise had imitated. He went behind the counter, casually flipping the alarm switch. As the sound system blared, lights flashed, security locks activated, and he casually strolled down the corridor, making his way towards the back of the building.

Outside, when the alarm sounded, Casey and Donnie whirled around to see the emergency lights flashing. "Shit!" Casey exclaimed. He stormed up to the front entrance, trying the door to find it locked. "It won't budge. Donnie, get over here and use your nerd hacking kills to-" He was cut off when Donnie thrust his foot into the door once, twice, three times, shattering the glass so he was able to reach around, using a pick to unlock the handlebar. "... well, that works too."

"Let's go, April is in there!" Donnie snapped at him, Casey following him as they made their way inside. Once Donnie hacked the security pad to access the lobby, they proceeded onward. After a few moments, he slowed to a stop, his brows furrowing in concentration. "Casey, stop fooling around and-"

"She's contacting me." He interjected, slowly looking up. "I can hear her. She's crying for help."

"What?! Casey, where is she?" Donnie exclaimed.

"She... Pennywise... it has her. She was ambushed and it's taking her-"

"Where is it taking her, Casey?" Donnie asked tensely, lightly shaking his shoulders.

"I don't know! She doesn't know, I don't know!" He shouted.

Donnie hissed, turning to jog further into the lobby. He froze upon seeing the dead bodies scattered, inhaling sharply as he looked upon the gruesome scene. Casey approached next to him, shaking his head in disbelief. Dread came over both of them, Donnie breaking into a run past them. He rushed behind the counter, grabbing a book and flipping it open. "Come on, come on..."

"You're rushing me and then you turn around to read some guest

book?!" Casey threw his arms up.

"This is a building directory Casey, I'm trying to locate Roberts' office." He snapped. "Here... come on, seventh floor!"

The pair ran to the elevator, but Casey groaned. "It's deadlocked. Part of the security system."

"Oh, for the love of-" Donnie muttered before dashing to the stairs, getting on his communicator. "April. April, please, if you can hear me, please say something." He said tensely as he ran. He finally reached the seventh floor, kicking the door in as he sped down the hallway. He turned into Grayson's office, seeing that it was empty. He frowned deeply when he spotted something, picking up her communicator from off the floor. "April? April!" He shouted as began to search frantically, kicking in every door and looking around every corner. "April! April..." He ran a hand over his scalp, clutching her communicator in his other hand as he sunk to his knees. As Casey finally caught up, approaching him, he got on his own communicator as Donnie's trembling hand moved his glasses to place his large fingers over his moistening eyes.

"Leo. Raph, Mikey, anyone read me?" Casey spoke, swearing under his breath.

Back in the lair, Raph took up his communicator. "Hey, what the hell is taking you girls so long? What are you, going underwear shopping or something-"

"Raph, April was ambushed at Grayson's building. Donnie and I were waiting outside when the alarms were activated, and we can't find her." Casey cut him off.

"What?!" Raph jumped to his feet. "How in the hell did this happen?"

"I don't know. All I know is she needs our help. We found her communicator, but she's gone. It got her." He said through clenched teeth.

"We'll be right there. Let us know if you find anything." Raph said before pocketing his communicator, swearing loudly as Leo

approached. "We have to get downtown, now."

Leo furrowed a concerned brow. "Why? What's going on?"

"April's in trouble. I'm gonna murder that fucking clown." Raph spat before striding briskly toward the tunnels. Leo bit his lip, swiftly taking up his katanas. "Mikey! Grab your weapons and let's move, now!"

Meanwhile, Casey looked over his shoulder when he heard the sound of sirens blaring from down below, cops swarming the perimeter of the building. "Shit, we've got to go."

Donnie furrowed his brows. "This is what they had planned." He glanced over. "This ambush was supposed to happen and then we were meant to take the blame for it. By the time we get down there, the police will have already infiltrated this building."

"So we better get our asses moving, then." Casey said, glancing over his shoulder again. "They're in the stairwell. They're moving fast."

Donnie inhaled sharply, shaking his head. "You go. I'll hold them off."

"Are you crazy?! They're- they will throw you right in the slammer if-"

"I don't know how, Casey, but you have a connection with April that no one else has. This was the only way I could track her." He held up the communicator. "If something happens to her, if she dies... then I'll become nothing anyway. She's my everything, Casey. I told you I would do anything for her. Find her, and save her before it's too late." He said before putting her communicator in Casey's hand. "Now go. I'll buy you some time."

Casey nodded, regretfully making his way down the corridor. As much as Donnie irritated him, he never would have asked for this. He glanced back as he was about to descend the back stairwell, police officers filling the other end of the long hallway. As their shouting swelled, surrounding Donnie, he furrowed his brows before tearing away from the sight.

Alright, going to cut this chapter here on one of my famous cliffhangers! So, what happens now? Will April survive? Will Donnie be blamed for what happened, and can Casey and the other turtles find a resolution to this? Find out more in the next update! Leave your thoughts in a review, and thank you for reading!

19. Tough Questions

Hello, everyone! Surprised to see me? I must first apologize for the long hiatus. My work schedule and a few other factors were preventing me from focusing on my writing, and it's taken me some time to make some necessary life changes so that I could return to the keyboard and do one of the things I love best! I want to thank those of you who have shown support and concern during this time, it has really meant a lot. I am going to hopefully try to update my fanfictions more often and within a decent time frame. In the meantime, if you need to go back and refresh where you last left off, I completely understand! I do hope you enjoy the next update!

Casey made his way into the cool night, slowing down once at a safe distance from the building. He crouched down and hung his head, running a hand down his face. As it began to lightly drizzle, April's face appeared in his mind. "Damn it, Red. I was the one who was right this time. I like it better when you win the argument." He muttered to himself. As he got to his feet, he heard quick footsteps approaching, turning to see the rest of the turtle squad.

"Casey!" Mikey cried. "Don't tell me it's true, bro! Don't tell me April's gone!"

He blew out a breath. "Sorry, Mikey. I don't have good news to tell you." As Mikey hung his head, Leo took a step closer.

"Get Donnie and come back to the lair with us. She may not have her communicator, but maybe she still has something on her that he can track." Leo said.

Casey shook his head. "He took one for the team. Cops swarmed the place, it was a setup. Everyone in that building is dead, but no sign of Grayson. He had something to do with this, he-"

"What did you say?!" Raph shouted then, moving past Leo. "You let him get taken into custody?! Do you know what they'll do to him there?!" He shoved at Casey, Leo having to intervene.

"Let him finish, Raph." Leo said.

"No. I'm not going to stand here while they take away my brother. I'm going after him."

"Raph, I am telling you that you are not going to do anything of the sort." Leo said. "He obviously felt that Casey had to get away. He's the only one now who can defeat Pennywise. He's the key to ending this."

"Really?! So what good have his fancy mind powers done, huh?! April's gone, Donnie's being hauled off to prison, and we're just standing around here with our thumbs up our asses! You think Donnie's going to last five minutes with those goons?! He's a mutant, Leo! That bastard Grayson is behind this and HE-" Raph pointed at Casey. "-just gave our brother a one way ticket to his death sentence!"

"He is not going to die, Raphael. We are going to get him out of there, we are going to find April, and we will conquer this." Leo said.

"You just love to hear yourself talk, don't you? You talk, talk talk, about how we're going to magically save the day in huddles, in little meetings! You call yourself a leader?! An adult?! Wake the hell up, Leo!" Raph shouted as the rain began to come down harder. "You watch. They'll come after us next, and then dad. This was their plan all along. But no, no. You keep dreaming your dreams and planning your plans. Keep talking to some quack on the phone about voo doo shit or sit in front of the TV and watch the news. Maybe their next headline will be how they kill Donnie. You sit there and watch how happy everyone will be that they exterminated one of us, how little he means to the people he saves because he's just a monster to them." Raph's voice shook. "And I'll sit there and remember how little I told him how much he did mean to me."

"Raph... you don't mean that, do you? They can't kill Donnie. He hasn't done anything wrong." Mikey asked worriedly.

"You wake up too, Mikey. What Donnie is or isn't won't change how they see him or what they'll do." Raph said before turning to shuffle away from the group.

Leo exhaled slowly, closing his eyes for a moment as he shook his

head lightly. Mikey frowned deeply, slowly turning to follow Raph. Casey approached Leo, silent for a moment. "I'm sorry." He said. "I should have done more to stop her."

"You didn't cause this, Casey. But now... I have a difficult choice to make." Leo replied.

"That being?" Casey rose a brow.

"Should I use our resources to search for April, not knowing where she is, or go after Donnie, where I do know where he is, but it will be nearly impossible to get to?" He glanced over at Casey. "Every time I think I'm doing the right thing... so much wrong comes from it." He finally moved his feet, following the direction his brothers had gone. Casey stared after him, never having felt so defeated. He shook his head, glancing at the ground for a moment. When he looked back up, there was an angry expression in his eyes.

He wasn't going to go after April, or Donnie.

He was going to go after Grayson. He was going to get to the bottom of this.

When they returned to the lair, Splinter was pacing about worriedly. His ears perked up when the group approached. "Leonardo, where is Donatello? His name is all over the police scanners, what's going on up there?"

"Grayson's whole building was wiped out. Every evening employee was slaughtered, and April was abducted." Leo replied.

"And the whole thing's being pinned on Donnie. Police got to him so Mr. Jones over here wouldn't become Mr. Juvie." Raph spat. After Casey shot him a look, he sighed.

"Look. Donnie and I were waiting outside the building for April. Suddenly, the alarms sounded from inside, we saw lights flashing. When we got in there, everyone was butchered. April was ambushed, and Grayson's MIA. This was a setup, and he has something to do with it. I tried to tell April this wasn't a good idea, I tried to tell

Donnie that taking the fall for me wasn't a good idea, but neither one of them listened." Casey said.

"Oh my goodness..." Splinter breathed worriedly, bowing his head for a moment. "The doctor is on hold in the other room. He wished to speak with you urgently." He said then.

"Great. I have a few things to say to him-" Raph was cut off by Leo, who proceeded to the phone. Raph paced around tensely as a result, and Mikey sat down quietly.

"Dad...?" He asked. "They won't hurt Donnie, will they? He didn't do anything wrong. People only get punished if they committed a crime, right?"

"Michelangelo, as you have seen in the past, some treat us as lesser beings because they are small-minded. We can only hope that justice will take your brother's side now." Splinter said, patting his shoulder. He put on a brave face for his son, but inside, his heart sank. "He did what he felt was right for the task at hand. We must continue to work toward a solution in his stead."

"This is what that thing would have wanted. What Grayson would have wanted. Donnie was the brains of the team, he was the one who figured out all this stuff and had all this tracking shit. Now he's not here. Now April's not here. You saw those computer scans. Her mind control- brain waves- whatever was hitting high levels. This is a game to them, and they're winning." Raph said.

Meanwhile, Leo sighed as he spoke to Doctor Sleep. "They're both in their hands now. April, and Donnie. They're not just close to us, doc. They were two of our strongest players."

"I am well aware of this, Leo. And I know you have a difficult decision. But April must be found and retrieved before it's too late. If they kill her, Pennywise will absorb her shine, her power. It will tip the scales further against your favor."

"I know that. At the same time, they're going to give my brother the electric chair if we don't intervene there either." Leo said.

"I'm sorry I cannot be of more assistance. All we can do now is develop Casey's shine, he is the last leg we have to stand on."

"Understood. We'll do what we can over here. Thank you for trying to help us." Leo said before the call was disconnected. As he slowly hung up the phone, he glanced over to gaze at Donnie's lab area. He shut his eyes after a few moments, unable to imagine what he was enduring right now.

He couldn't let his sacrifice be for nothing.

April groaned, slowly getting to her feet as her eyes adjusted to the low light. She could tell that she was underground, having been brought to one of several abandoned subway lines in the city. She shuffled around for a few moments before checking what possessions she had on her person. She tried to find her communicator, but it was not in her jacket. She tried to locate her phone, but that was missing as well. Left with no means of outside communication, she scrambled for ideas, her eyes scanning for a possible way out. As she was doing this, a sudden thought came to her. She closed her eyes in concentration, biting her lip. She tried to reach out to someone with her mind, mentally projecting the appearance of her surroundings.

She was interrupted when suddenly, she felt her feet separating from the ground, gasping as she was hoisted against the wall. She was met with the face of Donnie, who smirked darkly. April clenched her teeth, spitting at its face as she tried to kick at it. It emitted a dark chuckle, slowly reverting back to Pennywise.

"Well, look what the cat dragged in!" Pennywise piped, chuckling mockingly. "A nice, tasty treat for its master."

"I know what you are... and I'm not afraid of you." April said with clenched teeth, shutting her eyes tightly. At this, it burst into laughter.

"You think I'll go away if you keep your eyes shut long enough? I'm going to drag your slimy reptilian friends down here one by one and hollow them out. How does that sound, hm?" Pennywise smirked.

"You'll never get to them. They're going to find me and it's going to be the end of you." April said, to which it burst out in a fit of giggles.

"You seem to be pretty confident about that, huh? Uplifted even! Let me give you a sight for sore eyes." Pennywise said.

Just as it began to unhinge its jaw, opening its mouth wide, something came to April's mind, remembering the boy she had seen in the tunnels.

"Don't follow the bad lights."

April gasped, clamping her eyes shut. Pennywise growled, its throat undulating in order to speak as its jaw continued to unhinge.

"You're clever, that's for sure... all the more irritating for me!" It shouted as it began to shake her, April whimpering as she kept her eyes closed. She gasped as she was flung like a rag doll, landing on the concrete ground. She scrambled to her feet, taking in a sharp breath when she caught sight of an exit. She bolted for it, but halted when Pennywise quickly blocked her path. She was about to run from it when its jaw unhinged once again, April's expression becoming blank as her eyes rolled up. Her feet began to separate from the ground, her body levitating as her head slowly fell back. As this happened, Pennywise closed its mouth, smirking darkly as it watched.

"Now the fun part begins." It growled lowly, its teeth glistening in the low light.

The next morning, Leo rose from sleep, getting on his feet. He took some time to train before having breakfast, eventually wandering into the den area. He sighed, shaking his head when he saw Mikey and Raph plastered to the TV. "Really, you guys? You can play video games later. We really need to be focusing on more important-" When he approached close enough to hear the TV, his voice cut off when he saw they were watching news coverage of the gruesome scene from the prior night.

"... dozens of the corporate building employees were found slaughtered, as

police found upon responding to the security alarm that was activated at about eight in the evening. Only one individual was found alive within the premises, labeled as mutant Donatello. The mutant has no surname, and has now been deemed a prime suspect. Interrogations are underway to determine likability that Donatello committed the crime, uncovering information and its- his testimony, as well as any possible motives or accomplices. Donatello is known as one of four brothers who were responsible for salvaging New Yorkers from a potential toxin exposure several years ago, as well as a high threat unidentified weapons attack some time after that. They are classified as moderate biospecies mutants, but have not had any reports of murderous tendencies before this time."

"Look at this." Raph motioned to the TV. "They're making a damn spectacle out of him."

"They took a mug shot of him and everything... he doesn't belong in prison, dude..." Mikey frowned deeply.

"Mutant activist groups are taking to the streets today, offering their words of support for the incarcerated mutant. Speaking of, mutant activist leader and channel seven news reporter April O'Neil, as well as New York Governor candidate Grayson Roberts was reported missing last night after camera footage retrieved showed the pair entering the lobby through camera footage that detectives were able to retrieve. Their bodies were not among the dozens found at the grizzly scene."

"That's because he's the one who kidnapped her, you morons!" Raph shouted, Leo waving his hand at him to quiet down.

"... this, according to investigators, gives reason to believe there may be accomplices in these string of crimes, and gives rise to believe that there may be a greater, but more sinister plan at play here."

"Great. I knew it. They're going to come after us next." Raph hissed.

"What? Why?! We didn't do anything!" Mikey exclaimed.

"Didn't you hear a word they just said? They're going to look at us as accomplices!" Raph responded.

"Raph. I'm going to go down to the police station today and explain

everything. Casey was with Donnie, so he can be his alibi. We can give enough testimony to clear Donnie and-

"You think they're going to take the word of a mutant and a guy with a record? You think what you say has any chance against what that bastard Grayson is going to come up with? He's got money, Leo, he could even pay people to talk shit against us!" Raph snapped.

Leo was about to snap back at him, but he held his tongue, exhaling slowly. Could he just as easily argue with him? Of course. But this was not going to do anything for the people who were in dire need of help. "You're not wrong about any of these things, Raph. There are people out there who choose to do the wrong thing. But we can't just hide and be silent because of that. April and Donnie are depending on us, now. We have to at least try something." At this, Raph quieted, but stared at the floor as he shook his head. "We've been in hairy situations before, Raph. April has come to our aid. She saved us from the fire, she saved us from Shredder. She's taken the fall for us more times than any of us can count."

"I'm sure Donnie would be able to count it all right now..." Mikey said sadly.

"Now we need to save her. And in order to do that, we need Donnie by our side. We're not a team, we're not a family, if even one of us are missing." Leo said.

Just then, Casey entered the lair, shrugging off his back pack. "The doc already contacted me this morning." He said upon approaching them. "April is still alive, but she's closed off."

"Closed off? What does that mean?" Leo asked.

"Like... Pennywise did something so she can't reach anyone and we can't reach her. He thinks that it's keeping her alive to save as bait. It wants to lure us." Casey said.

"Well, what are we waiting for?" Raph cracked his knuckles.

"Look, I have no idea how to do a battle of the brains against this thing. I mean, I'm getting the hang of this shine thing, but... actually

fighting with it? I have no idea how that works." He replied.

"Well, you better figure it out fast." Raph nudged his shoulder, jabbing his finger at him. "Donnie put himself in the slammer so you could keep playing these mind games."

"Woah, you guys, look at this!" Mikey waved them over. "April's alive! She and that weird dude!"

"Breaking news this morning as the grizzly story from last night continues. The newest development is that both missing persons reported last night have been found alive and are now in safe hands. No interviews are being done as of yet until both parties recover, but a statement was taken from each. From governor candidate Grayson Roberts, he expressed, quote; 'his deepest and solemn condolences to those who lost their lives last night and their families. He [and Ms. O'Neil] are grateful to have their lives, and are already planning a fundraiser for the families of those who tragically perished.' Ms. O'Neil stated only that she is, quote; 'still in utter shock and trying to rationally collect her thoughts.' More to come as this story develops-"

"That's not April." Casey was the first to speak, shaking his head slowly. "I'm telling you right now, that's not her. It's that thing. I'd be able to reach her if it was."

"Why would it want to plaster itself all over the news?" Raphael asked.

"Because it isn't. It's got something planned. Raph was right about one thing. You're going to have to work fast, Casey. This thing isn't waiting around." Leo said.

"Wait... so is this another clone? What if I'm a clone and I don't know it?! Guys, what's my favorite thing to eat? My favorite band? My favorite comic book?" Mikey exclaimed.

"Mikey, will you knock it off? You've seen how Pennywise works. It impersonates people, it doesn't clone them." Leo said, rolling his eyes. "Hang in there, Donnie..." He said to himself.

Donnie groaned in pain, slowly glancing up at the prosecutor who had been trying to beat answers out of him for hours. "Your shell may be tough to crack, inmate, but your mind isn't. You can't even boast possessing the same capabilities as man. You're going to tell me why you killed those people. And you're going to tell me what hand your other disgusting brood had in it."

"I didn't kill any of those people. They were dead when I got there. Pull up the camera footage." Donnie said hoarsely.

The prosecutor scoffed, rearing his fist back to send another blow to Donnie's face. "You have the audacity to tell me how to do my job-"

"That's enough." A stern, feminine voice spoke as the door closed behind her. "You've done quite enough. I'll take it from here."

"You better be careful, Ms. Vincent. I may decide to escalate this to the feds." The man spat.

"I'm sorry, don't you have three other cases to work on that are well behind schedule? Don't think I haven't done my homework. I'm current with every person in this room except for the suspect, and that's quickly going to change. Now, unless you want to talk over tea, I suggest you move out." She replied. The man curled his lip, moving past her as he and his team exited the room briskly. Upon the door closing, Rebecca glanced over at Donnie for a moment, sighing as she took a seat across from him. "Let me call in a nurse to clean you up-"

"No." Donnie muttered. "Don't waste your time on me. You need to use your resources, your people, to find April. You have to find April."

"You mean, April O'Neil, correct? What happened to her, Donnie?" Rebecca asked.

"She was taken. Roberts is in on it." Donnie said.

"Grayson Roberts? Donnie, what exactly is going on here? You and your brothers have always kept your noses clean- more figuratively than anything- despite your uptake in this city. How did you get in this mess?" Rebecca asked.

"There's something out there. It's killing people. Children. It's becoming more powerful. It has to be stopped. But it knows we're onto it. That's why it took her."

"It? Is a mutant responsible for this?" She pressed.

"No. This is no mutant." Donnie replied.

"So what exactly are we dealing with, here?"

"I don't fully understand it myself." Donnie responded.

Rebecca sighed, leaning forward a bit in her chair. "Donnie. I've seen many faces on the other side of this chair. I've seen killers, goons, delinquents, the worst kind of people. I've seen the look in their eyes. I've learned a lot by looking at someone's face. I thought I knew all there was to know until you and your brothers came into the picture. I learned to look deeper. Donnie..." She shook her head. "I know you didn't murder those people. But the DA and the public are not going to take a gut feeling as an answer. I need you to help me, to help you." She leaned back a bit. "April and Grayson were both found alive this morning and they're both in safe hands."

At this, Donnie slowly looked up, his hairless brows furrowing. He rested his head in his large hands, hissing in a breath. "That's not her..."

"I'm sorry?" Rebecca tilted her head.

"That is not April O'Neil you found. That's what It wants you to think." As he said this, Rebecca drew back in confusion.

Well then, this is becoming a nail biter! So, will the other turtles be able to get Donnie out of prison and save April? Will they find a way to take down Grayson, and ultimately Pennywise? More to come everyone, so keep an eye out! Again, thank you for bearing with me and being so patient after such a long hiatus. See you next time!

20. Letting Their Guard Down

Good afternoon, everyone! I hope you're having a great weekend, and I am back with a new update! Things are going to continue to heat up, so I hope you're prepared! So, without further ado, please enjoy the next part of the story!

Casey sighed, stopping as he approached his decrepit childhood home. As he stared at it for a moment, the trio of turtles stopped behind him.

"So, what is this supposed to accomplish?" Raph asked.

"Just let him do what he has to do." Leo replied.

Casey closed his eyes for a moment, taking in a breath. He reopened them when he felt someone move past him, staggering back to see it was his father. He looked upon the porch as he approached, seeing himself and his sister laughing as they ran up to hug him. He saw his mother smile as her husband planted a kiss on her cheek before the four entered the house.

"Come on." Casey said, the four going up to the front door to enter. When they did, Casey hesitated when he saw it was exactly as he remembered it- no longer a decaying husk, it was a warm home filled with family and love. The turtles were unable to see this, and Raph was on guard, remembering what transpired the last time he had gone there.

"Uh, you guys? Why's Casey staring at that wall there?" Mikey asked uneasily.

Casey furrowed his brows, shaking his head when he saw his mother turn from the window. "Hi, sweetie."

"Mom? What are you doing here?" He asked.

"Where else would I be?" She chuckled, approaching him to give him a hug. "How was school?"

Casey cleared his throat. "Mom... I'm not in school anymore. I finished. Kind of."

She tilted her head, chuckling. "You were always so silly, you and your wild imagination. Your father's already upstairs... I was waiting for you. Funny, I thought I would see your sister first."

"Mom..." He sighed. "She's- A- Abby... is in a psych ward. She's been there for years. And you've been gone, mom. You gave yourself up when you were both kidnapped." He shook his head. "You're not here."

She stared at him for several moments. "I've always been here, sweetie, and so have you. I would know. I've never left."

"Maybe it's time we do. There's nothing left in this place, mom." Casey said.

"Arnold." She smiled, patting his face. "Those friends of yours have been a bad influence. Listen to your mother. She knows best. They're only going to cause you trouble. It's time to come home. Your father and I are exactly where we need to be. We're just waiting for you kids. Abby is very close. You have to let your friends go home, too."

"Yeah." He nodded. "But first, you're the one who's going home." He shut his eyes, tightly, focusing as a loud shriek filled his ears, penetrating into his mind. He focused on a small orb of light, the orb growing slowly to disperse the darkness. When the orb finally prevailed, he staggered back, opening his eyes to see that no one was there. He sighed, holding his head as Leo approached him.

"Casey, what is it?" He asked.

"I think I did what I was supposed to do." He glanced back at the turtles.

Back within the lair, Splinter's ear flickered as the telephone rang. He shuffled over, extending a hand to take it off the receiver. "Hello?"

"Hello, Splinter. I am aware the others have not returned yet. Just know that Casey was successful in what I set him out to do." Doctor Sleep said.

"That is relieving to hear." Splinter said.

"He will need to fine tune his Shine if he has any chance of saving April, let alone taking on Pennywise. I discovered something that the creature is able to do. It is able to project itself to other places and present itself as the apparition of a human passed. Essentially, It can wear their soul like a mask. This is how my father succumbed to his madness years ago. The spirits have the ability to affect physical objects, such as moving things and opening doors. I had a premonition that It was going to attempt to do the same to Casey. Thankfully, It miscalculated. However, it came at a price- now it knows that Casey, too, is a shiner, hence why he did not succumb to its manipulation. This task was both beneficial and a risk to us. It is going to continue to try to strip his and April's protection- your sons- and expose them to greater danger. I am aware that Donnie is incarcerated. He has a strong emotional connection with April. This is also, both a good and bad thing. I know they mean everything to you. I do not have a child of my own, but the one I'm trying to protect may as well be. I truly wish I could be physically present to assist, but I cannot place her in harm's way. I have seen the price paid for those unprepared attempting to fight this evil."

"I understand. Regardless of their shortcomings, my sons will band together to do what they must. They will play their part and do it well. I have my utmost confidence in them." Splinter replied.

"I believe they will as well. Unfortunately, I cannot speak much longer. Eyes are always watching. Take care." Doctor Sleep said before ending the call.

As he placed the phone back on its receiver, Splinter glanced behind him when Casey returned with the other three turtles. Once they settled in, Leo looked over his shoulder. "Casey's getting a good handle on his power. Now, we need to get a handle on breaking our brother out of prison."

"And how are we going to do that, huh? Last time we broke into the police station, we nearly had our shells handed to us." Raph said.

"No need to remind me that the genius behind that move was you, Raph." Leo shot him a look. "However, when all of that happened, we

had Donnie and April at our backs. Now, we have to do this without the mastermind."

"No more dream team..." Mikey sighed sadly.

"Look. Let me talk to Rebecca. Ever since you guys saved the city from being vaporized, I'm not a pariah there. I can at least get information, if anything. We need something to go on before we just decide to make a heist."

"Since when do you think before you jump, Jones?" Raph smirked.

"Since Donnie and April's lives are on the line." He replied, and Raph couldn't help but nod in agreement.

Leo nodded as well. "Alright. Casey, you head down to the police station. Find out what you can, and then-"

"Freeze! Hands where we can see them!" A sudden shout came as about a dozen police officers infiltrated into the lair.

"Woah, are they mind readers too? You can just ask them questions right here, Casey!" Mikey said.

"They're not here to chat over tea, Mikey. Get your hands up." Raph growled.

Leo swore under his breath as they all complied. When he heard footsteps, his eyes darted as Splinter entered the room. "Dad, just do what they tell you."

"Why have you come here?" Splinter asked.

"Get your hands in the air, right now!" A police officer shouted. "We will shoot!"

Leo hissed. "Dad, please-"

"I am your sensei, Leonardo." Splinter met his gaze. "And this is our home. We have a right to know why they are here."

"I'm not going to protest at the expense of you getting hurt." Leo said.

"Leonardo. I cannot let them take you. Too many lives are at stake." Splinter insisted.

"Gentlemen." A voice said then, someone weaving through the police officers until he stood at the forefront.

"Roberts... you bastard..." Raph muttered.

"I'm sure you're all wondering why we're here. I'm truly sorry to have to come to this. April... is very upset that it's come to this as well." Grayson said.

"Don't you say her name, you- ah!" Raph exclaimed as he was tazed.

"Raph!" Mikey exclaimed, about to go to his aid when one of the officers threatened him. He bit his lip, furrowing his brows as he slowly stood back upright, hands in the air as Raph slowly got to his feet.

"Where is she?" Leo pressed. "Just give her back to us. We're not trying to sabotage your campaign or hurt you, Grayson. We just want to help this city. We want to help people. If you know anything about this creature, I'm begging you. Please. Just help us do what's right."

Grayson pursed his lip. He took out a familiar photograph, looking at it for a moment. "Do you know who this is? April didn't either when she saw her. But she did see her... in a vision. My sister, like her, had the power to shine. What she did was considered atrocious. Unforgiveable. Taking the shine of children through torture. But you know what I think? She did them a great service. She showed them the truth of this world. She showed them that great power comes through great suffering. Those who cannot bear that pain should sacrifice their power to those who can endure it. Those children now live peacefully in the life beyond life. See... Pennywise and I..." He shook his head. "We're not all that different. You're looking at me, and you think being compassionate will lead to success. It will only result in failure- at least, in your eyes. I almost pity you. You're a poor excuse for a life form, you have no drive for what truly matters." He chuckled. "Our story wasn't all that special- mine and Rose's. We came from abuse. But we soon learned to make our pain theirs. We learned the rules of give and take. And when she was taken from me,

I promised both her and myself that I would take the world, because that's what she was to me. Anyhow... we'll discuss this further when you're escorted to the proper facilities."

"No! You cannot take my sons-" Splinter emitted a cry as he was tazed, falling to his knees.

"Get off of him!" Raph shouted, bowling his way through officers.

"Raphael, stop!" Leo shouted.

"No! You can stand here and do nothing, I-" Raph hissed when he was knocked unconscious, falling to the ground. Mikey's voice cracked as he called his brother's name, Leo slowly closing his eyes as they were taken into custody. As they were, Grayson approached Casey as he glared daggers.

"I understand you've gotten in good graces with the police chief due to certain events. Do not think this connection is going to benefit you, Mr. Jones. I hold all the cards now. Your fate will be sealed soon enough. I suggest you accept that and cooperate. Once you're out of the way, I will find your... other friend. I'm going to make him watch while his sweet little niece suffers until death."

Casey scoffed. "Man, when I get my hands on you..." He shook his head. "... you're going to be seeing my face in your sleep if I let you live."

Grayson shrugged. "I'm glad to know you at least have dreams still. Take care, Mr. Jones. You know who's coming for you next."

As Grayson turned, the entire police party filed out, taking the turtles and Splinter with them. As they did so, he glanced over, hearing the TV playing in the background.

'A search warrant for a group of bio-radiation class mutants, a clan of turtle brothers named after various Renaissance artists, has been filed after video footage throughout Manhattan captured the previously altruistic individuals terrorizing citizens throughout the city. Some described them as "monsters," "savage," tearing through the streets in a feral manner. One of the brothers is currently a suspect in the slaughter

spree case in the business district. As of now, we have no idea if this is connected to any of the other concerning acts taking place throughout the city. More to come shortly, but first, we have Ms. O'Neil with us, making her first live appearance since that harrowing night.'

As Casey watched, slowly approaching the TV, he stared at April's face on the screen, the words blurring as he could only focus on her.

But it wasn't her. It was only a mask.

'... what do you think should be done in regards to recent occurrences, Ms. O'Neil?'

Casey watched as April smiled stiffly, slowly turning her head to look into the camera.

"... Kill them. Kill them all."

'Yes, that is a good solution, and understandably, the best way to handle this situation. For now, thank you everyone for watching, and we'll see you at the six pm coverage.'

As Casey slowly backed away from April's dark expression peering into his eyes, he began to hear the sound of screams swelling in his mind, his vision darkening until he was no longer conscious. Some time later, he groaned as he came to, something capturing his attention. He rubbed his head, looking over his shoulder when he realized the telephone was ringing. He stumbled as he made his way over to it, grabbing it off the receiver. "What?"

"Casey. How are you holding up?"

"Let me think... April's who knows where, Donnie's in the slammer, Leo, Raph, Mikey and Splinter just got hauled off, there's a killer clown still on the loose and Grayson's running the show here. Otherwise, everything's peachy, thanks for asking." Casey snapped.

"I understand your frustration. I called because-

"Really? You understand all the way from the middle of nowhere?!" He threw his arm up. "Look, whatever it is you want to tell me, I already know, okay? You can stop being captain obvious, I know that

you know what's going on because of your mind powers or whatever. If you really want to help, get your ass down here or up here or wherever the hell 'here' is in relation to you!"

"Casey... believe me, I did not want for this to happen. Pennywise is cunning, and unfortunately, his allies make the situation all the more difficult. You have a far more difficult choice to make. Going on a wild goose chase for April alone is not an option. You either need to pursue Roberts, or you need to find a way to break the turtles free from their imprisonment. I know the path ahead seems daunting. Believe me, I have been in life or death situations since I was a child, just like you. But you have friends, confidantes, and they will help you."

"I gotta get down to the police station. Rebecca is the only person I know that can help who isn't kidnapped or in the slammer. Not going to like it... but I don't really have a choice. I'll let you know if it works or not." He said before slamming the receiver down, throwing his back pack over his shoulder before heading out.

Rebecca exhaled slowly, closing her eyes as she pinched the bridge of her nose. "Look, Jones." She began. "The evidence is plastered all over. I have no choice in the matter here. They have a shitty defense."

"It's all a lie. This creature is wearing their faces like a mask. It and Grayson have fooled everyone. April is still missing out there." Casey said.

Rebecca stared at him flatly. "Really? Then who was this that was just interviewed?"

"It's not her." Casey emphasized. "She's trapped somewhere."

"So you're saying that someone is impersonating her?" Rebecca asked. "Jones, this isn't invasion of the body snatchers."

"You're right. It's worse. I don't care what strings you have to pull. You've got to let them go. We need to find April and kill this thing." Casey exhaled sharply. "The longer we play around here, the less chance we have of saving her."

"Casey... I really want to believe you. I do. I can tell that you're speaking with your heart here. But the heart is different than the law, and I have to follow protocol." She replied.

Casey pursed his lip, nodding. "So you're pretty much telling me that you're just going to let everyone get killed. Okay. I get it." He got up from his seat, moving past her.

"Jones. Jones!" She exclaimed. "What are you planning on doing?"

"Just keep following protocol. You do your job... I do mine." Before she could respond, he walked through the door, heading out of the police station and back to his apartment. After thinking for some time, he grabbed his hockey mask, his backpack, gearing up. As he was about to leave his apartment, the phone rang. He stopped, glancing back at it before shaking his head, going out and closing the door behind him. Just then, his cell phone rang. He rolled his eyes as he took it out.

"Casey, being reckless is going to help no one." Doctor Sleep's voice was heard.

"Neither is sitting in your mother's basement playing phone tag." Casey spat.

"If you end up in jail, any chances of saving April will go right out the window. Listen to me."

"No. I'm done talking." Casey growled. "I'm busting the reptilian gang out of jail. I've got connections, in more ways than one. You taught me a few things, I have to give you that. Now, I'm going to use it. Call me when we're underground." He ended the call without another word, slowing to a stop where he closed his eyes, inhaling the cool, night air. "This may just be crazy enough to work. If I can pull this off... you guys owe me one." He said to himself, reopening his eyes as he headed for the prison.

"Hey. Did you see the game yesterday?" A security guard asked as they stood post outside the police station.

"Yeah, that grand slammer was something, huh?" Another guard

chuckled.

"Those Yankees man, never get old. Thinking of taking my son next month. Boy loves baseball." He then noticed someone approaching, straightening up. "Jones, visiting your girlfriend again, huh? Come on, man, just because you're like Batman around here doesn't mean-" The guard stopped, widening his eyes. "J- Jones, behind you! Damn it, code blue!" The guard exclaimed, he and his partner seeing a man in critical condition limping on the street on the opposite corner. As they ran toward the man, Casey glanced over his shoulder.

There was no man there.

Casey slowly exhaled. "Can't believe that worked." He said, waiting for some of the other guards and police officers to leave their posts around the perimeter of the building and just inside. When the coast was clear, he used his fob to enter through a side door, quickly entering a pass code to deactivate the alarm. He closed his eyes for a moment, reopening them. "Of course they couldn't make this easy..." He groaned before heading down the stairwell.

Inside the prison cells, Raph stared ahead, his expression serious. They had huge chains around their wrists, ankles, and neck, several guards posted outside of their cell. Mikey sighed, staring at his feet. "Man... I could go for some-"

"Mikey, if you say you could go for some pizza right now, one more time, I'm going to use your chains for an early execution." Raph spat.

"Hey. We're all in the same boat here. Mikey, stop whining, and Raph, stop threatening him." Leo said.

"Why should I?! We're stuck here in some cramped cell for something none of us did, Donnie isn't even with us, he's in solitary confinement, and they're probably going to kill him for murders he didn't commit! And while everyone thinks April's hunky dory, she's probably rotting somewhere-"

"Don't even say it, Raph." Leo cut him off. "Don't count her out-"

"Why, because you want to believe that somehow we'll rise up and be

the heroes and save the day?! Guess what, Leo, let me give you a little wake up call, alright? April is dead! You hear me?! She's DEAD!" Raph shouted.

"Stop it..." Mikey whimpered.

"And what are you going to do, cry?! The both of you need to grow up and get with reality. No one's coming for us, or her." Raph growled.

"Hey." An officer approached the guards then, nodding toward the door. "There's a situation on the square."

"So? You go handle it, isn't that your job?" One of the guards scoffed.

"Chief wants all hands out there. She told me to tell you guys." The officer said.

"Hey. Listen, you pipsqueak rookie. We handle down here, you handle up there, that's how things work around here-"

Just then, the officer grinned widely, laughing at him. When the guard was taken aback in confusion, the officer lunged at him, the other guards scrambling for their weapons. Inside their cell, the turtles hopped to their feet as multiple rounds of gunfire went off, soon being silenced in a bloody scene. The sound of a body dragging was heard, the turtles silently dreading what came into view next.

"Appetizer's ready!" Pennywise said in a sing-song voice. "Don't worry... I'll save you three for the main course." It looked over its shoulder. "The skimpy second course should be here aaaany minute." It chuckled.

"You son of a bitch!" Raph growled as his chains tugged at his wrists, unable to get to the cell bars. "We're in here because of you, after what you did to April!"

"Oh, don't worry... soon the show will really begin." Pennywise cackled sinisterly.

Casey threw himself against the wall as officers and guards flooded the hallways, listening as he could hear frantic chatter among them

and their walkie-talkies. When he heard of a code red in the heavy containment chambers, he hissed under his breath. "Damn it you guys, can you stay out of trouble for one second?" He said to himself, making his way towards there once the coast was clear.

Rebecca sighed as her phone was ringing off the hook, slamming the palm of her hand on her desk. "What the hell is going on?!" She shouted over to her secretary.

"M'am, I can't keep up with the influx of calls!" The secretary replied. Rebecca got up from her desk, about to head out when an officer suddenly intervened.

"Chief, we need you to stay here. We're putting the station on lockdown." He said.

"The hell are you- what is going on?" She asked.

"One of our rookies went haywire in heavy containment." He said.

"What?! We're going to security. Bring up the damn cameras." Rebecca said. When he tried to stop her, she shoved his hand off her shoulder. "I am your chief and I'm telling you to escort me to security, NOW." She snapped, the officer nodding as he complied.

Mikey gulped as Pennywise stared at the trio through the bars, licking already bloody lips. "Is he going to try to come in here?"

"I don't know, Mikey, but if we're going to go down, we're going down fighting." Raph said.

"No." Leo narrowed his eyes. "If it wanted to attack us, it would have. It's waiting for something."

Just then, the security lock was deactivated, the door to the heavy containment chamber opening. Pennywise turned, grinning all the more when Casey entered through the door, halting upon seeing the deranged clown and the trio chained and behind bars. He groaned, glancing at them.

"Well, shit." He spoke. Pennywise did not hesitate, lunging for Casey. He dove behind the guards' quarters, scrambling to find a weapon. He

managed to find a spare gun, as well as a chain with a dozen or so keys on it. Pennywise hopped behind the counter, hissing as Casey kicked at him before firing his weapon. He then turned, trying to hop back over the counter when he was grabbed. "Take this and get the hell out of there so you can help me here!" Casey shouted, tossing the keys toward the cells. It skidded along the floor, Raph struggling against his chains to reach them.

"Damn, where's Donnie with one of his weird gadgets when we need him?!" He exclaimed.

"Just get it!" Leo shouted, internally panicking as Casey struggled to hold up against Pennywise.

"What does it like I'm trying to do here?!" Raph snapped at him, one of his large fingers slipping through the bars as he tried to inch the keys towards him.

In the security room, Rebecca shooed the guard out of the way, sitting in the chair as she typed furiously. She brought several screens focused on the heavy containment chamber into focus, rewinding them. She narrowed her eyes, watching as the rookie officer in question entered the area before beginning to viciously attack the guards there. Her eyes widened when after the guards were either slaughtered or fled, the rookie turned to look right up at the camera slowly, grinning eerily as before her eyes, he reverted to the creature's clown form.

"My God..." She breathed. "Jones wasn't making this up... and neither was Donnie." She shook her head as she tried to process this. "I'm going down there."

"M'am, this is a highly dangerous-" The officer stopped when she shot up, grabbing his lapel.

"This thing is a threat to this entire city and it's in our police station. The only possible chance we have of destroying it is in those chambers." She then hesitated for a second, taking a step back before taking out a key, unlocking a lock box with other special use keys inside. She shuffled through them for a moment, taking one into her hands. "You're going to shadow me. If you see anything dangerous,

we go to a safe area immediately until the threat passes, you hear me? There's something I have to do before I get down there." She said, nodding toward the door as the officer was once again forced to comply with her demands.

Well, it seems our heroes are in a pretty sticky situation! However, will Rebecca be a resource of help for them now that she's seen the creature with her own eyes? Will the turtles break themselves free in time to help Casey? Is there any hope for Donnie and April? There will be more to come, so keep an eye out for updates! Thank you all for reading, and please leave your thoughts in a review! See you next time!

21. Making The Breakout

Good evening, everyone! I hope you are all having a nice start to your week, and that you are ready for an action-packed update! If you are, please get reading and enjoy the next part of this story!

Casey grunted, scrambling to his feet as he threw himself against the wall to reload his gun. "Damn it, the hell are you guys doing over there?!" He shouted.

"Well, Raph's having trouble getting the keys because his fingers are all big and stuff!" Mikey replied.

"Your fingers are just as big as mine, I don't see you getting your ass over here trying to get them! Damn it, you couldn't have thrown them just a little farther, Jones?!" Raph snapped.

"Look, if I can get over there without being chewed up, I'll give you a hand!" Casey said.

"You could give your hand to me instead, buddy boy!" Pennywise suddenly exclaimed before pouncing down from the ceiling.

"I am really getting sick of your stupid face." Casey clenched his teeth as he flicked the safety off the gun. "Tell me where April is, and maybe I won't shoot a bullet through it."

Pennywise giggled. "Take a good look, Arnie, maybe you could go on a nice loveboat ride down in the sewer for all eternity!" Just then, it began to open its mouth wider than what should have been possible. As it did, Casey furrowed his brows, and suddenly, the phone at the guard's station began to ring. As a light began to rise from within the creature's throat, Raph squeezed his eyes shut as his chains began to give from how strongly he was pulling against them.

"Damn it- Casey!" He shouted, one of the bolts holding the chain plate in place shooting out from the strength of his pull. It gave him about an inch or two extra to move forward with, grasping the key ring

between two of his large fingers. "Got it!" He shouted, tossing them to Leo. He quickly undid Raph's chains, about to toss it to Mikey. "No. Open the cell door, Casey needs help." Raph said. Leo glanced between them, nodding as he tossed the keys to him. Raph undid the cell, sliding it open before tossing them back to Leo. As the phone rang off the hook, Raph slid to a halt when he saw Casey's eyes begin to glow, his feet slowly separating from the floor. Raph shouted, charging at the deranged clown and tackling it. When this happened, Casey fell to the floor with a thud, shaking his head as he snapped out of the dangerous trance. He whipped his head toward the sound of the phone ringing, sprinting toward it as he grabbed it off the hook.

"Casey, thank God you're alright." Doctor Sleep said.

"What the hell do you want?" He asked.

"I called in an attempt to warn you about the lights. That is what you just witnessed. This is what was done to April down underground. I could sense it was close to completely capturing you. You must not fall victim to it. But Casey... I can see what you've done. Remember to use what I've taught you. You've been doing very well. Save your friends and remember that you have allies who will aid you as you reveal the truth to them."

"Hey!" Raph shouted as Leo and Mikey undid their chains, running toward Raph to help him fight Pennywise. "Cut the gossip and help us out here!"

"Yeah, great, gotta go, doc!" Casey exclaimed as he hung up the phone, about to run over to the others when suddenly, the door to the unit flew open.

"Freeze!" An officer shouted as they flooded the room, weapons drawn.

"Oh great, not again!" Mikey groaned. "Leo, we can't handle them AND this psycho clown!" He bit his lip.

"You take care of them, I've got this!" Raph shouted, cracking his knuckles as Pennywise giggled lowly.

"Stuck between a rock and a hard shell, huh?!" He cackled. "So what's it going to be?! I'll gobble up whoever survives your little pathetic showdown!"

"Our business is not with the turtles!" Someone suddenly shouted. Rebecca made her way to the forefront, and Mikey beamed when he saw a sight for sore eyes alongside her.

"Donnie!" He exclaimed. "You guys, it's Donnie!"

The near sighted turtle stood tall, wearing a determined expression as he stood at Rebecca's side. "It's over, Pennywise." He said, Leo slowly smiling at the sight of his brother. "Tell us where April is. You're outnumbered, and you have nowhere to go."

The clown furrowed its brows, chattering its teeth as it shook its head. "Oh, please, spare me... you know it was all a game, don't you, Donnie boy?"

"You are under arrest for the endangerment of dozens of city children and the assault and murder of over a dozen police officers. You're going straight for death row." Rebecca narrowed her eyes. "You can do this the easy way or the hard way." She was still wary, a bit unsettled by the creature.

"Welcome to the twenty first century, asshole." Raph said, tightening his grip on Pennywise.

After a few moments of silence, the clown grinned widely, shaking as it began to laugh maniacally. Just then, the lights began to flicker.

"Oh, that can't be good." Casey breathed, looking to Rebecca. "Get out of here! Go, now, leave!" He shouted. Rebecca widened her eyes, looking up just as the lights were about to go out. Just as they did, Donnie quickly scrambled, the group hearing many objects clattering. When Donnie activated what seemed to be a high beam light, Rebecca gasped, scrambling back as she saw all her officers levitating, their expressions blank.

"Thanks for the warm welcome, Raffy." Pennywise said as his head slowly turned. As it did, the normally brash turtle drew back as he

witnessed something out of the Exorcist. It then opened its mouth wide, blood and guts spraying out as he scrambled back.

"Ugh, sick!" Raph shouted.

"Don't let it get away!" Leo said, about to tackle the creature when it clawed at him, Leo grunting as he hit the ground.

"Leo!" Donnie shouted, tossing something into the air. Leo caught it, realizing it was his katanas which had been confiscated. As Pennywise charged at Rebecca, Donnie dove in front, shocking Pennywise with his bo. He then tossed something else through the air, Mikey catching his nunchukus.

"Thanks, bro!" He smiled, gripping the weapon firmly.

"Raph!" Leo shouted. "Grab Casey and Rebecca and get them to safety!"

"What about you guys?!" Raph wiped his face, catching his knives as Donnie tossed them to him.

Before Leo could finish, Pennywise twisted around rigidly, its teeth bared as it lurched forward. As it did, Rebecca blinked in shock as it transformed before her eyes.

"Becca..." A little boy now spoke to her, frowning. "Why're you pointing that scary gun at me?"

"Rebecca." Casey hissed. "Rebecca, don't listen to it. This is what it does, don't-"

Before he could finish his sentence, Rebecca fired an entire round, her jaw tightening as she stared wide eyed at the bleeding boy on the floor. "Seal the unit. We're evacuating the station." She said tensely.

"Look... we can't let this thing-"

"Now!" She shouted as the other officers began to recover from being controlled by the creature, as if waking from sleep. "Get everyone out of here before it recovers!"

Raph swore under his breath as Leo nodded, being left with no choice but to comply with her order. They helped the other officers out, Casey staying with Rebecca until she was the last to exit, shutting the door and putting the alarm on. When she looked through the small, bullet proof window, she saw the clown then, standing and grinning darkly at her.

"You know it's going to find a way out, right?" Casey asked, the two exchanging a glance.

"Then consider this bought time, Jones." Rebecca replied. "Do what you need to do and figure out how to kill that damn thing. I'm putting the station on lock down."

"Finally, we agree on something." He shook his head. "First thing's first. We need to find April." He said. "And I know exactly who has an idea of where she is."

"Then stop talking and get moving." Rebecca said, Casey nodding as she watched him stride down the hallway. She spared one final glance inside the sealed off unit before making her way back up to the main area.

Meanwhile, Mikey beamed as he hugged Donnie. "Man, I thought we were never going to see you again!"

"I thought the same." Donnie replied. "I don't know how you guys managed it... but Rebecca finally believed me. She was the one who let me out."

"Don't thank us. We were in the same boat as you." Leo said, turning when Casey approached him. As he did, he exchanged a glance with Donnie, the pair nodding.

"Sorry about what happened back at the business district." Casey said.

"That was my choice." Donnie replied.

"Ready for take two?" Casey said then, taking out his hockey mask to cover his face with.

"Let's go back and gear up. If we're going to get to Grayson, we need

to know for sure where he is and make sure we're prepared for anything this time." Leo said.

"After what he did to us? I'm ready to rip his arrogant head off." Raph curled his lip.

"Not before he tells us where Pennywise took April." Donnie said. The five headed out of the police station, making their way toward the lair.

Splinter paced about the space, a small, blinking device around his ankle. He had been returned to the lair with the device, preventing him from leaving the underground and go after his sons. When something caught his ear, he perked up, his eyes widening as he quickened his pace toward the lair entrance. When he saw his sons enter along with Casey, he exhaled slowly, sighing with relief.

"Sensei! Dad!" Leo shouted.

"I am here, my sons." He replied, approaching them.

"Oh man, we totally just busted out of jail! We even locked the crazy clown in there!" Mikey exclaimed.

"Rebecca's letting us all off." Donnie added. "I think she got all the evidence she needs to clear our names."

"Oh, that is a great relief." Splinter said.

"We still need to find April though, dad. Have you heard anything about Grayson's whereabouts?" Leo asked.

"I saw on the news that he is no longer staying in his usual residence or place of business. No one is disclosing where he has gone into hiding." Splinter said.

"What the hell is that on your leg?" Raph asked then, pointing to Splinter's ankle.

"Really?" Donnie rolled his eyes. "Let me handle this." He cracked his knuckles, taking out a small tweaser as he crouched down. He

tinkered with the device a bit before the light shut off, the device unlocking before Donnie held it up. "Elementary, my dear Watson." He smirked as he tossed the now useless ankle bracelet aside.

Raph snickered, shaking his head. "Still a nerd, Donnie... but I missed you being around."

Donnie smiled and nodded. "Thanks, Raph."

Casey seemed uneasy despite the lighthearted conversation. The entire time he was in that prison unit, he was barely able to focus his mental powers against the creature, depending solely on the weapon in his hand, rather than the one in his mind. Just then, right on cue, the phone rang. All of them silenced, Casey sighing as he took the initiative to approach the phone, picking it up. "Hey."

"Hello, Casey. I am glad you and the turtles were able to make it back safely." Doctor Sleep said.

"Thanks." He replied.

"I can sense some uneasiness from you." He said then. "Casey, the things weighing on you, the panic, it takes away from focus. Don't beat yourself up over that. Believe me, I know all too well some of the factors that can hinder one's Shine. The time will come when you are more prepared to fight against the creature. Your next steps are good ones. I will tell you, however, that Grayson is very cunning. I dealt with his sister, and the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. If I could tell you where April was myself, I would... but Pennywise has prevented that. I will tell you that Grayson will be expecting you. There's no doubt that he knows about your success in freeing your friends. All I can tell you is to not underestimate him."

"Thanks." Casey nodded. "All I care about is finding April and make sure Grayson pays."

"Believe me, Casey... the wicked always get their comeuppance." Doctor Sleep said. "I hope to hear from you soon." He said before the call disconnected, Casey placing the phone back on its receiver.

"Alright..." Casey said as he turned around. "How are we finding this

son of a bitch?"

Donnie took in a breath, Leo smiling and nodding at him as he went over to his lab area, taking his seat. "Do your magic, Donnie." He said to him.

"Should be easy enough. I can easily find out what kind of device Roberts has and send out a capture signal which will establish a one way tracking connection to the GPS function on his phone. Once I do that, regardless of whether or not his GPS widget is active or not, I can-"

"Donnie, less talking, more typing." Raph cut him off, Donnie rolling his eyes in annoyance. After a few minutes, Donnie squinted his eyes as something popped up on one of his computer screens.

"Ooo, did you order a surprise pizza?" Mikey asked, beaming. "Is that beeping letting us know the order is ready?"

"No, Mikey, I literally just explained- never mind." Donnie shook his head, unable to help but smirk at his youngest brother's naivete. "Alright, I have a location." He said as Leo leaned over his shoulder to look on. "He's staying at the Plaza Hotel."

"Gee, you would think Trump would ban him from there. He always talks about 'draining the swamp' if he ever becomes president someday..." Raph snickered. "Like that'll ever happen."

"Look, we need to figure out how we're going to go about this. We can't just bust into some five star hotel. He's probably got every security resource he can get his hands on, too." Leo said.

"Because busting out of the New York City police station was a walk in the park, right?" Casey asked sarcastically.

"I don't give a shit what stands in our way." Donnie said to everyone's surprise as he rose from his chair. "He, with the help of Pennywise, falsely framed us, kidnapped April, and put countless lives at risk. We will get in that hotel and we will get answers out of him."

Leo, though surprised, gave him a nod. "Alright. Donnie, bring up a blueprint of the building, let's see what we're working with here."

Inside the police station, Rebecca grimaced as she watched the security cameras, Pennywise seeming to stare right at her through them. "This thing hasn't moved a muscle for over an hour. Anything from the mutant database?"

"No, m'am." An officer answered.

"We don't even have a classification? Not a single hint on how to deal with this?" She asked irritably.

"I'm sorry. We've got nothing." He responded, and she slammed her hand on the desk. "Damn it, this thing has been on a wild hunt through our streets and we have no idea how to even properly contain it! Get on the phone with the commissioner of mutant relations and tell them to put out a high alert." She exhaled sharply, looking back to the security camera as she jumped. Pennywise's face was even closer now, almost pressed against the camera. She tightened her lips, shaking her head. "You don't scare me, asshole."

"Everyone is afraid of something, Bucko Becky." Pennywise chuckled from the other side of the camera. "Only a matter of time until I figure out what makes Bucko Becky book it!" He burst into a fit of maniacal laughter, Rebecca gritting her teeth.

"Have your laugh now. I'll be the one laughing when you get an equivalent of the electric chair, you sick freak." She spat, turning to one of the security guards inside the surveillance room. "If he makes one move, you notify me immediately. Do you understand?"

"Yes, m'am." The guard replied as Rebecca spared Pennywise one last glance through the screen before making her way out.

Night soon came, and Roberts clenched his teeth, his jaw rigid as he received word on his news app that the turtles were no longer being held in custody, and that a different mutant was being held in their place. "Persistent sons of bitches." He hissed, tossing his phone onto the lavish mattress of his hotel room. "I swear, the moment I become governor, that damn woman can kiss her job goodbye." He turned, going over to the minibar, taking out an expensive bottle and

popping the cap off. He poured himself a drink, taking a sip before the phone rang. "Hello?"

"Hey, buddy." Casey smirked on the other end of the line.

Grayson hissed. "How in the hell did you get this number?!" He shouted, glancing back at one of his security men, motioning to them to keep vigilant.

"That doesn't really matter, does it? You probably think I'm pretty stupid for calling you, huh?" He asked.

"So." Grayson managed to keep his cool after his brief moment of shock. "You managed to convince the chief of police to break your reptilian friends out. I hope you don't expect me to credit you that. It was a matter of circumstance. So, Casey Jones... what do you seek by reaching out to me in this matter?"

"You know what I'm looking for, asshole." Casey curled his lip. "Did you honestly think I would let you walk away?"

"You don't have a choice in the matter. You are a boy who's just beginning to repair a broken reputation as nothing more than a vigilante delinquent, and I am a man who has far surpassed you in building such a foundation for myself. I'm a pillar of the community, Casey. It's going to take a lot more to knock me off my pedestal than the meaningless threat you pose me. All you have to know is that I will succeed in my intent to take down certain parties which inconvenience me."

Casey chuckled then. "You know... it's times like these that I'm really glad you do a lot of talking. It helps you distract yourself from loving the sound of your own voice, and it gives me good practice to tune you out while I'm trying to focus."

Just then, the door to the room opened, Grayson whirling around when the sound met his ears. "You idiots! Restrain him!"

To his further shock, one of the windows flew open, Donnie hopping inside as he activated the metal tiered shield extensions in his bow, the appendages extending into a large circle as he deflected the

bullets from Grayson's men. Once they paused to reload, Donnie took the opportunity to disarm them, easily subduing them as Casey pursued Grayson as he made his way to the balcony.

"Donnie, follow me when you get a good handle on things here!" Casey shouted, Donnie nodding firmly.

On the rooftop of the hotel, Raph paced about impatiently. "You're absolutely sure that this is the only way he can go?"

"Yes, Raph." Leo replied. "He can't get out through the windows, and Donnie said he would make sure to bar him from the second floor doorway or the stairs. If he goes up the balcony, it goes straight to the rooftop where he could access the door to the stairwell."

Grayson moved quickly, getting on his cell phone. "They're in pursuit. Get the chopper over to the roof of the Plaza, now!" He snapped before shoving the phone back in his pocket. As he reached the rooftop, he halted when he was suddenly met with the remaining three turtles, shaking his head. He was about to flee back down the stairs, when he was met by a swift thrust from Casey's foot, knocking him down. Before he could collect himself, he was hoisted up by Raphael.

"Hey, where do you think you're going so fast, pal?" He smirked tensely. He waited for Leo to collect his cell phone, searching for any other devices before giving Raph a nod. "You're just in time for a little surprise pool party we planned for you." He then turned, tossing Grayson into the rooftop pool. When Grayson surfaced, Mikey jumped in, grabbing him and giving him a noogie.

"Hey, come on, lighten up, dude! We're just messing with you!" Mikey exclaimed.

"Just like you messed with us." Leo said as he stood before him, crossing his arms. Raph, Casey, and Donnie, who had caught up to them, all loomed over him with darkened stares. "You're out of luck and you're out of options now, Grayson. It's time to pay for what you've done. And you're going to start by answering some questions we have. You can either cooperate, or make this harder for yourself."

At this, despite his current situation, Grayson began to chuckle, water dripping from his face and soaked suit. "Uh... was that supposed to be funny?" Mikey asked. "If it was, I don't get it."

"You're all neglecting one very important thing." Grayson said. "I have control over this city of ignorant sheep. And do you know why? Because their minds are mere fodder for it. You know of whom I speak of. And if you think he's going to stay in one spot for long... not until the time comes for his next slumber will he do that. Before that... like me, it will eliminate those who stand in its way!"

At the police station, Rebecca gasped when she received a distress call from the surveillance room. "Shit-!" She exclaimed as she strode quickly down the hall. She halted when she came upon blood and gruesome murder, several bodies strewn about the room. She slowly looked up, the light flickering as it stood before her. She noticed that several of the screens were broken, the glass having flown outwards, as if something had actually broken out of them.

All the broken screens had been from cameras in the cell Pennywise had been contained in.

Well, we are once again leaving this off on an ominous note! At any rate, the turtle brothers have been released from prison, and are determined to find April. Will they succeed before it's too late, or will they succumb to yet another trick by Grayson and Pennywise? Stay tuned for the next chapter to find out more! Until then, thank you for reading, and leave your thoughts in a review! See you next time!

22. To Fall, To Float

Good afternoon, readers! It's been a while, hasn't it? I have been quite busy as of late, but I have broken past that and my writer's block to bring this to you today! I hope this chapter was worth the wait, so please enjoy!

Leo broke his bewildered stare upon Grayson as he heard quick footsteps approach behind him, glancing over his shoulder to see Casey shaking his head.

"We have... a serious problem." He said with exasperation.

"What kind of problem?" Raph curled his lip.

Before his question could be answered, high winds picked up as suddenly, a helicopter hovered up and over the roof, armed guards pointing guns at them from the openings of the aircraft. Grayson smirked as a rope ladder was let down.

"Release the man and put your hands up!" One of the agents shouted.

"Damn it, I'm sick of this guy getting away with murder!" Raph growled.

Leo tightened his lip, clenching his teeth. "Mikey, let him go."

Donnie hissed. "Leo, he's not going anywhere until we know where April is."

"And we're not going to get shot down like sitting ducks, Donnie." He turned to Grayson. "This isn't over."

Grayson scoffed in response. "How cliché of you. You just don't know when to accept your position on things." He said as Mikey reluctantly let him go. He began his climb on the ladder, when suddenly, the entire helicopter lurched to the side, Grayson losing his balance and falling back into the pool below.

"Oh, shit! Get back!" Casey shouted as the helicopter began to

suddenly spin out of control. Staring in shock as the reason for the catastrophe remained unknown for the moment, they watched as the helicopter collided into several buildings until it finally broke apart in a fiery explosion. Screams of confusion and terror could be heard below, and Grayson even seemed shocked as he looked on. He furrowed a brow, not one of remorse or sympathy, but of puzzlement.

Suddenly, a gloved hand came up from over the side of the ledge, the Turtles and Casey taking another step back as they remained on guard. With the destruction behind it, in its wake, the sinister clown slowly rose onto the rooftop, Leo hissing out a breath.

"It's about bloody time you got here." Grayson tried to straighten himself out despite dripping with water, nodding behind him. "You've got your lovely group there, dispose of them as you wish."

Pennywise was silent, its grin slowly stretching across its face. It then lurched forward, hoisting Grayson up into the air as the others witnessed the unexpected event.

"The hell do you think you're doing?! Put me down, you animal!" Grayson shouted lividly.

"Wait a second, don't those two work together-" Raph was stopped by Leo, who held his arm out and shook his head.

"I don't know what's going on, but we need to be careful." Leo whispered.

"Leo, Grayson knows where April is, we can't let him-" Donnie gasped when Pennywise decided to dangle Grayson over the edge of the rooftop, the destroyed helicopter below as it lay in a fiery junk pile. When his angry shouting quickly transitioned to desperate cries, the arrogant, fearless man was suddenly reduced to a whimpering mess.

"What's the matter, buddy boy? I thought you liked long trips?" Pennywise asked.

"We forged a pact-! I'm not the one that threatens you, they are! Kill them!" Grayson pleaded.

"Oh, don't worry about that, pal. I'll have my turtle soup any day

now. But before that, I have an election to foil. People like you now... so you're no fun anymore." Its voice deepened. "You wanted me to frame the reptile squad over there, didn't you? Well, I'm going to make this your biggest story yet, bucko. This city will be crawling with fear once you've kicked the bucket."

"N- No, please, a- anything but this, anything!" Grayson's voice cracked as he looked over his shoulder at the distance between him and the ground, his eyes widening. When he glanced up, his breath was caught in his throat when beside him, upon the ledge, was a very familiar face. "... Rose...?"

In the next moment, Leo had to hold Donnie back as Pennywise released its grip, Grayson disappearing from view. He clenched his teeth as he fell, his eyes on Rose as her apparition fell with him. However, when he finally hit the pavement many stories below, it was only him, motionless as blood pooled around his broken body.

The turtles were silent, glancing at one another as Casey looked on. Pennywise then turned swiftly and rigidly, its attention upon them now.

"This asshole wants a showdown, he's going to get one." Raph cracked his knuckles.

"No." Leo said, taking a step forward. "We're the only thing standing in between you and this city, aren't we?" He asked. "Well, you can have us."

"What?! Dude, no way!" Mikey exclaimed.

Leo looked back over at Pennywise after hushing his brother. "You can have us on one condition. You tell us where you are keeping April. She's our friend, and we're not going to stop looking for her until you stop us. So... we'll have our match there. Us, against you. If we lose, you reap the reward. If we do go down, though... we're going down together. And that includes April." As he spoke, Donnie silently glanced between him and Pennywise- he prayed that the sadistic monster would accept the bargain and tell them where it had her. After a few moments of tense silence, it finally spoke.

"Well then... it'll be a grand spectacle then, won't it?"

Just then, the door to the rooftop burst open behind them, Rebecca making her way towards them with a small team of officers. Upon seeing the turtles and Casey, she commanded her team to halt.

"What the hell happened here?!" She exclaimed.

"A lot." Casey said flatly as he looked out upon the destruction. "Grayson's dead." She looked over at him in shock at this. "That thing killed him. So now, if it doesn't kill us, this city will when they pin his death on us."

Rebecca shook her head, her eyes wide. "What have we gotten ourselves into this time, Jones?"

"Something that hopefully we can get out of alive." Leo said as he approached them. "One thing is certain. It wants Casey. Somehow, he is the only one who can stop it."

Donnie whirled back around, grunting with frustration when he realized that Pennywise had used her sudden intrusion as a distraction to escape them.

"Damn it! Grayson's dead and we got nothing out of him, and now the circus freak is on the loose again and IT didn't tell us anything either! How the hell are we supposed to find April now?!" Raph exclaimed.

Donnie stopped for a moment, his brows furrowing in thought. "Pennywise... is known for scouring the sewers, isn't he?"

"Pfft, copycat." Mikey rolled his eyes.

"Well, technically we would be copying it, being it's been around for a lot longer than we have-"

"Donnie." Raph snapped.

"Anyhow... how did he word it- he said that our final showdown will be a... wait a second- wait a second-!" He whirled around. "Leo, Leo!" He exclaimed, shoving past Raph and Mikey. "Leo, listen to me, I-"

"Donnie, hang on one second, I'm updating Rebecca on what-

"I know where she is, Leo!" Donnie's voice cracked. "I know where April is!"

At this, Leo, Rebecca and Casey exchanged shocked glances, looking back at Donnie for an explanation. "Jones." Rebecca turned. "Go with Sherlock and his Watsons here. I'll give you a head start. The press should be here any second. If they see any of you, you're done for." Casey nodded in response, he and the turtles about to depart. "And Jones?" He glanced over his shoulder at her call. "Get this done."

As the five made their way through the quiet, empty terminal, Donnie stopped to glance at his tracker.

"Donnie. Are you sure about this?" Leo asked.

"This has to be where they are, Leo." Donnie turned. "The last thing it said to us was 'it'll be a grand spectacle.' You remember what April researched. This thing slinks through drain pipes, sewers, underground spaces. It was giving us a hint; the Grand Central Terminal."

"What if this is some kind of trap, huh?" Raph asked. "Bringing us down here so it can take us out, one by one?"

"Why couldn't it have taken April to a pizza store...?" Mikey groaned. "At least I would know she was eating something tasty all this time." The others glanced at him with flat expressions. "What? Come on, there is nothing that can't be solved by pizza!"

"Will you be serious about this?!" Donnie exclaimed.

"Both of you, shut up for a second." Casey held a hand up, furrowing a brow as he took a step forward. "I heard something. Come on."

The group proceeded forth, eventually stopping in an area with several archways leading to a different portion of the abandoned terminal.

"Oh come on! It's going to take us forever to search this place!" Raph

threw his hands up.

"Not if we each take an area." Casey said.

"No." Leo turned. "That's what it wants. Split us up, take us down one at a time, like Raph said." He glanced over at his brother, whose expression softened as he nodded.

Casey exhaled slowly. "I can try... to do that mind thing."

"Any downsides to that we should know about in advance?" Donnie asked.

"Only one way to find out." Casey replied, closing his eyes as he inhaled slowly. As he did this, Mikey tensed up when he thought he heard something skittering behind him, whirling around as he bit his lip. When he saw only rats scurrying about, he sighed with relief. Just then, he furrowed his brows.

"I smell something weird." He said aloud.

"Be quiet, Mikey." Donnie snapped.

Before he could reply, a ring of fire suddenly illuminated around Mikey, causing him to scream. Fire was one of his fears, crying for his brothers when he realized he was surrounded by the raging blaze.

"Mikey, hang on brother!" Raph shouted, running toward the flames, only for them to grow. "Leo, what do we do?" He shouted. "Mikey's in there!"

Just then, thick, black smoke began to rise, a pair of burning red eyes illuminating from within as a sinister smile stretched across the smog. Mikey was plucked from the ring of flame, the cloudy essence zipping past them and down a corridor, Mikey's cries echoing as he was taken against his will.

"Mikey!" Donnie shouted, sprinting down the corridor after him. He extended his bo, using it to swing around corners and increase his speed. He was barely able to keep his younger brother in sight, the others running after him until they all reached the main corridor.

"Shit, I don't hear him!" Raph shouted, the group moving through the corridor as they desperately searched for the youngest turtle.

"Mikey, give us a sign that you're alright!" Leo shouted. Just then, a clatter was heard behind them, Casey the first to see Mikey's nunchukus.

A chunk of one seemed to have been bitten off, teeth marks gouged into the smooth wood.

Donnie ran his hands down the sides of his head as he shook it. "Oh no. Nononono this cannot be happening-"

"Woah..." Mikey came out from around one of the pillars, picking up the weapon from off the ground. "Heh. This must have been tasty, huh?"

Leo sighed with relief. "Mikey... you're alright. Look, we don't have time for joking around. We have people to save."

"And clown asses to beat." Raph cracked his knuckles.

Mikey shrugged. "Better make this quick, then." Donnie reeled back as Mikey's smile began to stretch frighteningly wide, sharp teeth extending as he was about to devour the rest of the wooden weapon.

"You son of a bitch, what did you do with my brother?!" Raph shouted, charging forward.

"Raph, wait!" Donnie shouted, about to intercept his enraged brother when he was shoved harshly to the side, skidding on his shell until his head collided with one of the old, tiled walls. His vision was blurred, groaning as he struggled to sit up. The sounds of his brothers fighting against the creature were muffled, in a daze as he finally managed to rest his shell against the wall. His vision wandered, finally settling and focusing on something. When it began to clear, his breath became caught in his throat as he realized that he was staring at someone levitating in midair a short distance from him. "Oh my- April? April?!" Donnie's voice cracked as he scrambled to his feet, running over to her.

Meanwhile, Leo gasped when he caught sight of something himself.

"Mikey!" He rushed over to one of the pillars, skidding to a stop and kneeling down. "Are you alright, are you hurt?" He asked.

"It took my only weapon, Leo..." Mikey whimpered, shaking his head. "What am I supposed to do...?"

Leo tightened his lips, putting a hand on his shoulder. "Listen to me. Remember what sensei taught us. Your true weapon is in here." He motioned to his chest. "The one in our hand is just an extension of that. I believe in you, Mikey, I believe in all my brothers. We can do this."

Mikey nodded, taking his brother's hand. "Let's help Raph beat the final boss level!" He nodded. Leo rolled his eyes with a smirk before they charged into battle.

Casey clenched his teeth, shaking his head as he found difficulty focusing. As Pennywise swiped a clawed hand at Rafael, Leo slashed at it with one of his swords, making the creature hiss as it reeled back a bit.

"See... you thought you could break us apart." He shook his head. "We're not just brothers... we are always there for one another. And it's not just us, either. We will never stop until you are no longer a threat to us, our friends, and this city. So you can try all you want... but with my brothers by my side, I will never be afraid of what comes at me."

Just then, Pennywise slowly smirked. "Did you forget how to count, buddy boy?"

Leo tilted his head, glancing behind him as he narrowed his eyes a bit. "Donnie. Where is Donnie?"

"Casey!" Mikey suddenly shouted, causing Leo to whirl back around. Upon doing so, he swore under his breath when they saw Pennywise had moved rather quickly, holding Casey hostage.

"You know... you all think you're pretty smart for overgrown lizards, don't you? Well, your last hope is nothing but a juvenile delinquent, isn't he? Won't be so pretty anymore when I'm through with him-

sorry, ladies!" Pennywise cackled.

"Let him go!" Mikey cried.

"Mikey, he's not going to listen to you." Raph narrowed his eyes.

"Oh, I can almost taste the turtle soup now... you know, that big stupid turtle in space thought he was all high and mighty too. The more, the merrier my feast will be... you know what's as good as fear? Despair... a nice sauce with my seasoning. Sucking the hope out of your puny little heads is like sucking the fat out of a big, juicy steak..." Pennywise hissed. "So, Jonesy boy... you have enough words in your vocabulary to say anything before your good looks go down the drain?"

Casey grimaced, his brows furrowing deeply as his eyes darted to the turtles. "Sorry, you guys." He choked out. "Whatever you do... save April." He shook his head. "She's stronger than me. She always has been."

Donnie grunted as he extended his bo, poking it through one of the belt loops of her jeans as he pulled her down from midair. Once she was close enough, he grabbed her, his bo clattering to the ground as she became limp in his arms. "April, April, open your eyes." He patted her face several times before fumbling for one of his devices in an attempt to take her vitals. "I'm here now." He muttered as he held her face up with one of his large hands. His breathing deepened when she remained unresponsive. "I promised to be there... to not let anything happen to you... and I wasn't, but I am now. You saved us, saved me... please let me save you, April." He began to rock back and forth lightly. "You are a paradox, April." A lump formed in his throat. "How could you be my greatest strength and my greatest weakness at the same time?" He asked as his large fingers pet her hair. As the moments passed, he knew the percentage of her waking up again was decreasing exponentially.

At one time not long ago, he would have done anything for her to love him.

Now, he was willing to do anything for her to live.

Donnie slowly took off his glasses, hugging April to him as he choked out a sob. He muffled his cries with one hand, holding her with the other. He drew back after a few moments, gently placing a kiss on her forehead. He then placed a lingering kiss upon her lips, shutting his eyes tightly as he rested his forehead against hers.

When the sound of an intake of breath was heard, Donnie felt his heart skip a beat. Believing it was his imagination, he fumbled for his glasses, placing them back on as he looked upon her to confirm if it was indeed in his mind.

When he determined that it wasn't...

"Donnie...?" April groaned, her eyelids fluttering as she shifted a bit in his arms. "... How did you find me...?" She mumbled.

Donnie choked out a laugh, tucking some hair behind her ear tenderly as his face became moist with fresh tears. "Through wit, logic, and sheer willpower, April." He managed to say. "I can't begin to describe what I'm feeling right now, April."

"I can describe how I feel..." She sat up, wincing. "And it's not great." She blinked when she felt his arms hug her close to him, slowly becoming more alert. "Uh... Donnie?"

"I love you, April." He said with conviction, drawing back as she stared at him in surprise. "I don't care if you love me back or not. I will never stop trying to protect you." He held her face as she furrowed her brows. "When you've lost your way, I will always find you in the dark."

Her lips parted slightly, about to say something when they heard commotion not far from them. "Donnie!" Leo was heard shouting.

April glanced over at him. "Pennywise..." She muttered as everything came back to her. "Donnie... we can't leave this terminal without taking that thing down." Donnie shot his arms out to help her as she began to get to her feet. "It used me to bait you here- please tell me Casey isn't with you." She stopped when Donnie hesitated, groaning. "Oh, this is not good."

Meanwhile, Raph hissed as Pennywise began to extend its jaw, Casey wincing as he braced for the worst. "Leo, let me go find him-"

"No, we're going to have to handle this ourselves!" Leo exclaimed.

Raph cried out, unsheathing one of his daggers and tossing it at Pennywise. The weapon embedded itself in its forehead, the creature shrieking before sinking its teeth into Casey's shoulder.

"We're coming for you, dude!" Mikey shouted, about to charge at them when Pennywise was yanked from behind, dragged back so that Casey was released. Donnie grunted as he used his bo as a restraint, allowing Casey to collect himself. Pennywise growled, taking hold of the bo and flipping Donnie over his head. He landed on his back, trying to keep a hold on his weapon as Pennywise hissed and snapped at him, its face warping to imitate April.

"Come on baby, give me a kiss!" It shouted in dual voices, cackling as drooled onto his face.

"Sick!" Mikey winced.

"Come on, we've got to help him!" Leo shouted.

"PENNYWISE!" A voice sounded from behind them, causing the creature to whip its head over its shoulder. Donnie used its distraction to his advantage, whirling around on his shell and kicking the creature, knocking it down. When he did, he hopped to his feet, glaring upon it darkly.

"Eat this, funny guy." He said before flipping a switch on his bo, jabbing it at the creature's back as electrical currents surged through the weapon. Pennywise emitted a shrill scream, the violet hue reflecting in Donnie's eyes before he staggered back. Pennywise slowly lifted its head as smoke rose from it, April standing before him as she inhaled slowly.

"Casey." She called his name, her eyes flickering up to look at him. "We have to do this, now."

The young man straightened up, shaking his head. "April, I tried. I can't do it."

"We weren't able to save our families, but we can do this now, Casey." She extended her hand. "We have to leave this place behind now."

As Casey exhaled slowly, nodding and making his way to her, Raph took a step forward, Leo holding an arm out to stop him.

"No." He spoke lowly, his gaze meeting his brother's. "They have to do this. It's up to them now." As he said this, Donnie took a step back, the four brothers standing side by side as Casey joined April's, taking her hand and holding it.

Pennywise slowly rose, their gazes meeting as they were about to begin a battle none of them had ever experienced.

This battle of the minds would spell the difference between their salvation or their doom.

And the intensity continues! So, what did you think? Did Grayson have it coming? Can April and Casey overcome Pennywise in a battle of the minds? Stay tuned for future chapters to find out! Thank you so much for your patience and for reading. Leave a review of your thoughts, and I'll see you next time!

23. It Ends

Good evening, everyone! I realize it has been quite some time since the last update, and I apologize for that. However, I have not forgotten my fanfiction, and here I bring to you the conclusion of this epic crossover! I hope it was well worth the wait, and that you all enjoy!

Pennywise began to open its mouth wide, an eerie, amber glow coming from within row upon row of teeth. At this, April and Casey both closed their eyes; though they remained as they were, their consciousness ventured to the source of the monster- the metaphysical form which manifested within the realm of space. As the turtles watched on anxiously, April and Casey found themselves in the recesses of the universe, seeming to float towards a pulsating glow in the distance. As they drew closer, they passed through a web of flares. When a flare made slight contact with Casey's arm, he hissed as the essence singed him, like that from the sun.

"Casey." April said. "You have to let your mind guide you."

"I'm trying... there's too many of these things floating around. Is that why that son of a bitch says that all the time?" He replied.

"These are an extension of it. Each time it takes a soul, it spreads further. When it trapped me here, I had to keep myself from being caught in these. Just... follow me." She said, the pair continuing to float forth as they neared what appeared to be thick clouds forming a wide array of teeth. A pair of crimson eyes were nestled just above the formation, the gargantuan grin seeming to stretch beyond measurable proportions. Just then, the whole universe seemed to tremble as a deep voice bellowed out.

"This isn't the first time I've danced this dance." The voice hissed like a volatile gaseous mixture. "See... as long as one part of the whole survives... I will be everlasting like the universe itself!"

April narrowed her eyes, which began to glow. "The Great Turtle died, didn't it? It was supposed to be eternal too. If one immortal

being can die, so can you."

Casey did a double take, still unable to believe where they were. "April, what the hell are you talking about?"

"Casey, just concentrate." April said as the large tooth formation began to separate like a mouth opening wide. She squeezed his hand, clenching her teeth as she focused. The flares began to retract back to its master, Casey hissing as several brushed by him as they did so. He was having a harder time focusing on creating a shield around him as April had, the flares bouncing off and missing her. Once they were all collected, like a compressed web, Pennywise's crimson eyes bore into it as the raw energy absorbed into them. His eyes glowed like a pair of dead lights, and April's brow furrowed.

She knew Casey wouldn't be able to take this hit.

She quickly dove in front of him, clenching her teeth. She whimpered as she attempted to brace the pair of laser like attacks. Casey grunted, shielding his eyes from the blinding light.

"Shit, April!" He shouted as she began to succumb to the overwhelming power.

Back in the underground, Donnie's breathing deepened as April began to tremble, light burns appearing on her arms. "Something's wrong." He went to go to her, but Leo stopped them. "Leo, something's happening to her!"

"We can't intervene." Leo replied lowly as Raph tightened his lips, shaking his head.

"Come on, Casey, don't let her die out there... or in here... wherever the hell they're supposed to be." He muttered.

Mikey glanced worriedly between his brothers and the pair of humans, furrowing his brows deeply. After a moment of biting his lip, he inhaled sharply. "You can do it, April!" He shouted suddenly, to which Leo snapped his attention to him.

"Mikey, are you crazy?! You're going to distract them if you do that!" Leo exclaimed.

"No, Leo!" Mikey replied. "Remember when we were little, and dad would always say stuff like that to us when we were sucking at something? But then, we'd always do better at it!" He said, glancing between them. "Remember he said that all that stuff helps us grow?"

"Like giving a plant water and warm sunlight." Donnie muttered, looking up for a moment before glancing over at April. "April! If you can hear me, you have to stay strong!"

In the void, April was barely holding up against the deadlight attack, Casey swearing under his breath before moving forward, attempting to help her block the barrage. As they both struggled, distant voices were suddenly heard, April shaking her head.

"Am I hearing things?" She shouted.

"If you're hearing what I am, then yeah, we both are!" He replied. As the voices became louder and stronger, several glowing masses began to appear behind April and Casey, the pair barely able to glance over their shoulders to see the glowing forms becoming clearer. "What the hell?!"

"April, Casey, if you can hear us... we're right here with you." Leo's voice was heard.

"So you better kick that clown's space ass!" Raph was heard shouting.

"You have to come back to us, April." Donnie's voice spoke next.

"What about me?!" Casey shouted as he continued to help shield the assault against them.

"Fine, you can come back too." Donnie rolled his eyes.

"How are you guys even here?!" April exclaimed.

"It's magic!" Mikey shouted, before clearing his throat. "But seriously you guys, you have to win! Pretend he's the final boss!"

"Unfortunately we don't have multiple lives to spare, Mikey!" April replied, thrusting her hands forward. She thought her mind was going to explode. As the turtles continued to encourage them, by a

miracle, April and Casey began to gain the upper hand against Pennywise and the deadlights. Angering the creature, something shot out from the chaotic mixture of clouds and lights, wrapping around Casey's waist and whipping him around. "Casey!" April shouted, about to dash toward him when one of the deadlights struck her, sending her flying through the dark void.

"April?! No- shit, April!" He shouted, his voice echoing as she continued to spiral into the depths of eternal darkness.

"You see, Arnold?" The deep voice of the creature spoke. "Always so useless... an insignificant speck like you couldn't even save other insignificant specks... what makes you think you have a chance to survive? If you would have cooperated, I would have at least let you rot with the weeds on that putrid blue marble you call home." It hissed. "But you're pretty stubborn, aren't you?"

Casey grunted as the tongue like appendage squeezed his waist tighter, making Casey wheeze. "Takes one to know one." He spat.

"I'm going to crush you into delectable jelly..." The voice deepened. "And all your little friends are going to scatter like roaches when I come for them. But before them... I'll have a helping to some turtle soup courses." It chuckled lowly. "And that other pathetic excuse for a threat against me... April... she's going to wither out here. Give it a couple decades, not a single morsel will remember her. I can wait and test that theory, buddy boy- a few decades to you is a few hours to me!"

Casey could feel his whole body tensing as rage welled up inside him. The voices of the turtles faded in the background, all noise became muffled as his gaze met with the large pair of red eyes burning within the void. He clenched his fists as he felt greater pressure around his waist, feeling as if his ribs were about to snap. He began to tremble, focusing his mental energy.

He had to get to April... but he had to break out of the disgusting grip of this thing first.

As he threw every ounce of mental willpower into breaking free, Pennywise sensed this, keeping an iron grip on him as it continued to

try to break Casey- mentally, and physically. As Casey felt himself weakening, he suddenly heard something behind him. It began in a whisper, but then, he realized the sound was then right beside him.

"Arnold."

Casey whipped his head, glancing to the side as his eyes widened.

"... Dad?!"

"Didn't expect to see me here, did you? I don't blame you, kid. I wasn't exactly father of the year when I was alive." He shook his head.

"Look, appreciate it, but I'm a bit occupied at the moment!" Casey shouted.

"That's why I'm here." His father stated bluntly. "I wasn't there for you growing up. You're a tough son of a bitch like I am. That's why I'm not going to let this thing take you down. I had my life. You're going to live yours, kid."

"Arnold." Another voice spoke, Casey glancing over when he saw his mother at his right side. "It tried to use us to fool you. It's time to give it a taste of its own medicine."

Casey watched in disbelief as he witnessed the visage of his parents float forward, the pair standing side by side as the tongue like appendage began to wither. A bellowing scream came from deep within the jagged toothed mouth, Casey inhaling deeply when he finally felt the pressure leave his waist. After taking a few moments to recover from the ordeal, he took this opportunity to dive away from the chaos, hoping that he could retrieve April. "April!" He shouted as his eyes darted, desperately searching for any sign of her. "April!" He called again. He then spotted her, tightening his lips as he pushed himself to get to her, his hand extended. He finally grabbed her hand, pulling her toward him. "April. Hey, April, wake up!" He shouted, shaking her as she came to.

"Ugh... Casey?" April groaned.

"Yeah, I'm prince charming. Now, pull yourself together, Red. We

have to finish this thing." Right on cue, a loud bellow was heard, the pair glancing toward the sound. Pennywise was greatly weakened at this point, the pair somehow able to sense this.

"What do you think is going to happen if we actually defeat this thing?" April asked.

"Guess we'll have to find out." Casey replied, beginning to float forward. April did so alongside him, tightening her lips when they stopped within range.

"You thought you were so powerful... because you destroyed people who were vulnerable, people who you could control. But you can't control everyone. You're nothing but a coward." She narrowed her eyes, light beginning to illuminate around her as the dead lights began to circle about. Casey glanced over, the same happening to him as he focused. "There are forces in this universe more powerful, more memorable, than fear. You're the one who will be forgotten."

"Guess you're learning that lesson the hard way, asshole!" Casey shouted. Pennywise roared, the dead lights darting toward them in a last resort attack. The auras around April and Casey illuminated brighter, shooting out a bolt of light to counterattack the dead lights. At this, the dead lights burst into a large array of sparks, soaring in all directions like burning embers. As they did this, they shot through Pennywise, tearing through his visage as it began to screech loudly. April and Casey winced, covering their ears as it slowly dissipated, becoming nothing more than floating dust in space.

The pair watched this in disbelief, exhaling the breath they had been holding. Before either of them could speak, they felt themselves being drawn backwards, as if the force of gravity had taken hold of them. Space became farther and farther away, their presence becoming heavier and heavier.

Soon, they both opened their eyes- neither of them remembered exactly when they had closed their eyes, but now, they found themselves where this battle had began- on the cold, hard floor within the abandoned portion of the Grand Central Station terminal. The pair took in their surroundings, glancing over at one another. When everything came back to them, realizing what they had done,

April exhaled with relief, smiling. Casey returned the gesture, the pair moving to sit up.

"Casey..." April breathed. "I-"

"You guys did it!" Mikey shouted, making the two jump a bit as he fist pumped the air.

"Mikey, I told you not to startle them!" Donnie exclaimed.

"Both of you, quiet down for a second." Leo scolded as he resumed a phone conversation.

"Well, don't congratulate us all at once..." Casey rolled his eyes. One moment later, he grunted as he felt himself being hoisted up, his shoulders being squeezed together.

"Hey, come on! Your buddy Raph's proud of you, Jonesy!" He said, causing Casey to grimace more as he gave him a noogie.

"You guys..." Leo approached then. "Doc's on the phone. He said that whatever you two did..." His expression softened. "... it worked."

"Uh, hello? I said that like, five minutes ago!" Mikey said, Leo shooting him a flat look.

"Anyway..." Leo returned his attention back to April and Casey. "With Pennywise gone, and Roberts biting the dust... we can work on clearing our names."

"Uh, Leo? We should probably get them checked out first before we do that." Donnie said. "For all we know, their brains might be scrambled eggs by this point."

"Donnie, it's going to take a lot more heat than that to fry this brain." Casey snickered.

"Why, because it's already like a rock?" Donnie snapped.

"BOYS." April held her hands up. "Can we bicker when we're ABOVE ground?"

Leo crossed his arms, shaking his head. "Already back to normal. But we need to get this city back to normal. Come on, let's go."

"Wait, am I back to normal too?" Mikey asked.

"Mikey..." Raph nudged him lightly. "You were never normal to begin with." He said, watching as Donnie and Casey both tried to assist April. The group headed out of the terminal, knowing that they were more than content with what they were leaving behind.

Within the following days after that fateful battle, the turtles reached out to the NYC police to present video footage of Pennywise, as well as survivor testimonies, to the appropriate parties in order to relieve the turtles, Casey and April of any charges against them. Once it was known that they stopped this dangerous entity from taking any more lives, they were once again honored as heroes, their reputations restored. At the ceremony, Donnie blinked as he heard his name being called. After glancing around, he finally found the source of the voice.

"Caleb?" Donnie cracked a smile. "What are you doing here?"

"Look, see them?" He looked over, Donnie doing the same as he saw a small group of people wave a bit cautiously. "That's my dad and his family. He asked me how the people at that place found me and I told him about you."

"That's really great, Caleb." Donnie smiled. As he spoke to the boy, April glanced over when she realized that Donnie had moved away from the group.

"Hey Donnie? I want to be a hero like you someday." Caleb said as he took out a small police badge. "My dad's a cop. He said that you saved him, too." The boy smiled. Donnie's expression softened, glancing up as the man gave him a nod. Donnie inhaled sharply, returning his gaze to Caleb.

"Caleb... I'm glad that you think I'm a hero. But... your dad is the real hero. See, my dad is a hero too. When I was little like you, he took good care of me and protected me. When you grow up, if you become

a hero like him... you're going to save plenty of lives yourself. You have to keep working hard." He pointed at the small police badge.

"Do you think I can do it?" Caleb asked.

"I know you can. Just remember to do the right thing." Donnie said. "And stay in school."

"Hey Donnie!" Raph shouted from behind. "Come on, you can be a babysitter later!" He laughed.

"Well, I have to go, kiddo. But... I'm glad you're with your family. That's more important than anything." Donnie said. He waved, about to head off when he felt the small boy hug his leg, halting.

"Thanks, Donnie." Caleb said. "Whenever I'm afraid, I'll remember to be brave, like you." He said before stepping back, smiling and waving himself before running back toward his father.

Donnie chuckled to himself, adjusting his glasses as he reflected upon the heartwarming moment. He jumped a bit when he felt something against his shoulder, placing a hand over his heart when he realized it was April.

"I have to admit, that was pretty adorable." She smiled up at him. "Come on. There's someone who wants to speak to all of us."

"Is it Rebecca? I would think she was retiring for the day." Donnie asked as they headed over towards a side street, the crowds dissipating now that the ceremony was over.

"Nope." She said, smiling as they joined the rest of the group.

"Hello, Donnie." A familiar face smiled lightly.

"Doctor Sleep?" Donnie's brows rose.

"You can call me Danny. There are no more direct threats against us." He nodded before nodding toward a young woman next to him. "This is my niece. Roberts... planned on coming after the both of us after he dealt with you all because he held us responsible for his sister's death. With him gone, we have a lot less to worry about."

"Less?" Leo asked.

"There are still fragments of her influence out there... Rose the Hat's. But it's scattered and weak. I'm sure with Pennywise gone, it will further diminish. Those who can shine will no longer have to worry about being preyed upon by such malicious individuals." Danny said.

"You really have no idea how much good you've done." The young woman added.

"Nice to be appreciated for once." Casey shrugged.

"I'm just glad we're not being carted off to jail." Raph said, flicking a toothpick out of his mouth.

"Well, it was nice to see you all again. I'm sorry to cut this short, but unfortunately, I have a lot of work to get back to. I wanted to personally thank you all for your efforts." Danny said.

"We couldn't have done it without your guidance, doc." Leo nodded.

"Regardless... April and Casey had the power within them all along. They were the brave ones- I was too afraid. My niece is all I have. I was too afraid to put her at risk."

"You don't have to apologize. I understand." Leo said, thinking for a moment. "My dad... he's done the same for us in the past."

"Hey, come on! You have us now!" Mikey beamed. "Now we can talk about other stuff on the phone too! Like pizza, and video games, and-"

"Yeah, that will be great, but for now, Mikey, they really need to go." Donnie intervened.

"You know..." Danny smiled. "I think someone just left their pizza box in front of their apartment building just now. It's still warm." At this, Mikey fell silent. "Just down the block."

Mikey did a double take, the youngest turtle making a mad dash down the street. The group chuckled at this, shaking their heads.

"That was a good one." Casey said.

"Oh, no, he was serious." His niece smiled. At this, the chuckling died down, the group glancing at one another quizzically. "Well, it was nice to meet you all. We'll have to visit the city again... if my uncle allows it." She said, giggling before the pair said their goodbyes.

Several minutes later, Mikey returned, grinning from ear to ear. "Guess who got free pizza?!" He exclaimed, holding up the pizza box.

"Woah." Raph blinked, looking around. "That's... really weird."

"I think we all need to go home." Leo shook his head.

"Agreed... see you all tomorrow after work?" April asked.

"Actually... I'm going to see my sister tomorrow." Casey said. "I have a lot I want to tell her. And... I want to help her, somehow..."

April's expression softened at this. "That's great, Casey. If you need anything, let me know, okay?"

"You got it. Need some company back to your place?" He asked.

At this, Donnie straightened. "A- April? Can I walk you home?"

"Really?" Casey asked flatly. "Starting that up again, huh?" He smirked.

"Yes, Casey. Because I care about April. And when all of this was starting, our dad had a conversation about getting older, and what that means." Donnie said.

"Okay, so just because he had the 'birds and the bees' talk doesn't mean that-"

"No, Casey. It means taking responsibility. I care about April. I want to make sure she's safe. And if I want to be a gentleman and walk her home, and she accepts, then I have no reason to feel ashamed." Donnie said. Leo rose his brows as Raph nodded his head lightly, Mikey snickering. April pursed her lip as she too, glanced at him in surprise.

"I'll accept that offer." April nodded. She wanted to speak to Donnie about a few things, anyhow, and there was no better opportunity to do that than now. As the pair bid them goodnight, Casey scoffed.

"Would have been nice to get some dating advice from my dad... apparently I need it." He was about to walk off.

"Hey." Raph approached him, stopping him in his tracks. "Look, Jones. Just because you have no dad doesn't mean you have no family to give you advice or whatever." He cracked his knuckles. "We've all lost people or stuff, but we're still kicking, aren't we? Look... I can tell you all kinds of secrets of how to get back at Donnie. Deal?"

Casey thought for a moment. "Fair enough. Thanks, big guy."

"No problem... brother." He lightly punched Casey's shoulder, rubbing it before they parted ways. As they did, Leo exhaled lightly.

"Huh. Maybe there's some hope for my brothers to grow up after all." He thought aloud.

"Hey Leo? Does this pizza slice look like a funny face to you?" Mikey asked, holding it up as he stuffed a different slice into his mouth. Leo rolled his eyes playfully.

"Well, almost all of them." He said to himself.

April turned to Donnie once they reached her apartment. "Did you want anything to take for the road?"

"No thank you, my lady." Donnie replied, April chuckling lightly.

"Donnie... never change." She said.

"You may be a bit late on that one." Donnie replied.

"What do you mean?" She asked.

"April..." He began. "... you know that I'll always..." April tilted her head as he sighed. "Seeing Caleb today, his family... it made me

think."

"About what?" She asked.

"Up until now... I feel like the enemies my brothers and I have faced, the lives we saved.. we were just skirting through. We had our serious moments, but that's all they were, moments. Not enough time to really take things seriously. Not enough time to understand the consequences of what we were doing. The importance of what we were doing. What we could have lost..."

"Donnie." April spoke. "Don't ever doubt what you've done."

"I don't. But April... maybe... this silly dream I've had is just that. A silly dream. Maybe in the grand scale of things, it doesn't matter. And maybe, that's okay."

April thought for a moment, moving forward to step in front of Donnie. "But we don't have to be on the grand scale, Donnie. Not all the time. Now we can come back down to Earth. Caleb... he wants to be a police officer like his dad, doesn't he?"

"Yeah, he does."

"But that's impossible. At least... it is now. But what's impossible now, may not be later on. At one time, it was impossible to defeat Pennywise. But with diligence, hard work, and patience... it became possible." Donnie's breath became caught in his throat when her smaller hands took his. "Something about what you said earlier... it made me think too, Donnie. No... you're not a boy genius anymore." She smiled a bit. "You're someone that I don't think I could live without. Every time I fall... you're the one picking me up."

Donnie was silent for several moments, processing what she said to him. Without warning, he cupped her face, planting a kiss on her lips. The gesture lingered, the pair finally breaking it. They stared at one another for a few moments, silently what the action meant for both of them. They eventually parted without words- they did not need to speak, the pair having a mutual understanding of where they stood now.

Eventually, all the turtles met within their underground abode, their father waiting for them as always. They would return to their antics, as if nothing had changed... except that so much had changed. Though their boyish mannerisms remained, they had all grown in their own way through these trying experiences. Through all they had faced, they had matured into the heroes they needed to be, and their friends along with them.

Together, they had grown stronger together, and overcame the impossible.

And there you have it! It took some time, but I finally completed this story. I feel very proud of this one, and how it all came together. I looked into several of Stephen King's novels for inspiration, and I really had a lot of fun with this one. Thank you to all of you who read this, and for all your patience and support. Thank you for bearing with me and the long delays between chapter uploads and for understanding that life sometimes gets in the way. Your support is very much appreciated. Please feel free to share this with a friend if you liked the story, and I may return with a new one in due time. Once again, I hope you all enjoyed, and I will see you next time! Enjoy the rest of your summer!

~Kapra